THE Hudson REVIEW

FREDRIC JAMESON:
Wyndham Lewis as Futurist

RICHARD WILBUR:
Poetry's Debt to Poetry

MARVIN MUDRICK:
Twenty-Three Stone-Deaf Theologians

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD:
Understanding Virginia

DANIEL CURLEY:
The Eclipse—a story

Poems by EDWIN BROCK, ISABEL CASSERES.

Letter from England by BERNARD BERGONZI.

Reviews by VICTOR BROMBERT, ROBERT S. CLARK, J. E. CHAMBERLIN, JOHN SIMON, VERNON YOUNG, CHARLES W. MILLARD, DAVID PAUL FUNT, PATRICK CRUTTWELL AND FAITH WESTBURG.

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Notes on Contributors

DANIEL CURLEY's most recent collection of stories is *In the Hands of our Enemies* (University of Illinois).

RICHARD WILBUR's latest books are *Walking to Sleep* (poems, 1969), *The School for Wives* (translation, 1971), and *Opposites* (1973: children's verse illustrated by the author). He was recently elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

FREDRIC JAMESON* teaches literature at the University of California, San Diego and is the author of *Marxism and Form* and *The Prison-House of Language* (Princeton University Press). The essay in this issue is part of a larger study on Wyndham Lewis.

Invisibility is the Art of Survival, the first U. S. collection of the British poet, EDWIN BROCK,* was published in 1972 by New Directions.

ISABEL CASSERES died in July, 1972. Her posthumous poems are being edited by her daughter, Mrs. William Hall, and her brother, Richmond Lattimore.

ROBERT S. CLARK* is a freelance editor and writer, a contributing editor and columnist for *Stereo Review,* and the author of many articles on music for that magazine.

J. E. CHAMBERLIN is at present on a leave of absence from the University of Toronto, where he is Assistant Professor in the Department of English, to work with the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs in Ottawa. He has completed a book on Paul Klee.

VICTOR BROMBERT is Chairman of the Department of Romance Languages, Yale University.

PATRICK CRUTTWELL and FAITH WESTBURG* are colleagues in the Department of English, Carleton University, Ottawa, Canada.

The Turn of a Century, a collection of essays by BERNARD BERGONZI, was recently published in England by Macmillan. Barnes and Noble will be bringing out an American edition.

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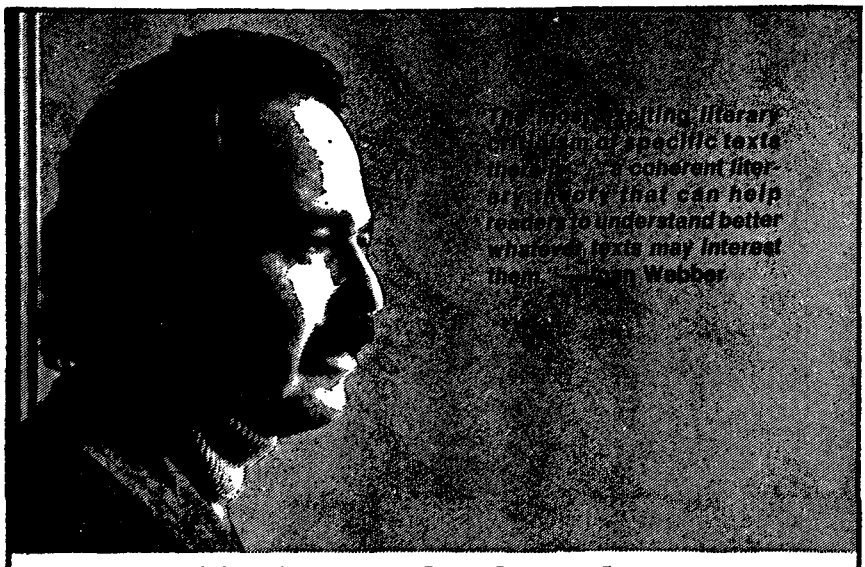

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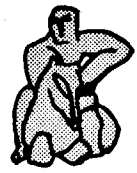

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DANIEL CURLEY

The Eclipse

It was an awful day in a series of awful days. All morning — it was the fifth Wednesday morning in a row —Mason had sat in the courthouse lobby across from his wife, pretending to read in order to avoid meeting her eyes or seeming to listen when she talked with her lawyer. He tried to listen, of course, but he could hear very little. He wondered what her lawyer was saying to her. When his own lawyer came out and talked to him, he still wondered what was being said. And when the two lawyers went back into the judge's chambers arm in arm, he wondered what they said to each other, what to the judge. He felt at times as if he were standing at a supermarket checkout, watching aghast as the clerk rang up an endless tape of items he hadn't intended to buy. Often they were alone in the lobby with the statue of Lincoln, a hand extended to each of them but eyes still fiercely on Stephen Douglas. She knitted row after row, upstaging him as usual. He could only bring a book, a solid respectable book, and make sure he had it right side up and kept his head bent over it.

His lawyer came out at noon and said, "That's all for today." Mason shrugged. He was no longer outraged.

The lawyer assumed a stance like Lincoln and said—probably with an eye on his biographer—" 'The hungry judges soon the sentence sign, / And wretches hang that jurey-men may dine.' " He was a very literary sort of lawyer.

"Just so," Mason said. He started for the stairs.

"Next Wednesday," the lawyer called after him.

"Same time, same place," Mason said without turning.

"Just so," the lawyer said. It was his phrase after all.

Mason turned his back on his office and instinctively walked in the direction where he would soonest meet open country. He chose back streets, mostly deserted, for he felt himself surrounded by a force field of gloom and despair, an object of loathing to himself and others. He knew they could feel what he was, and he didn't want to see it in their faces. That would be too much. Especially he didn't want to see it in Sandy's face.

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"You aren't really like that, Mr. Mason," she had said. She was a kid then, a student at the University working part-time in his office.

"Like what?"

"Like the things you say."

"Such as what?"

"Such as, 'Most men live lives of quiet desperation.' "

"Don't they?"

"I don't believe it, and I don't think you do either."

"I think I do."

"You're putting yourself on," she said.

"Good lord," he said. "What a language."

"And you don't believe men's lives are 'nasty, brutish, and short' either."

"But if I think I believe it, how can you say I don't?"

"I just feel it."

"That's getting pretty esoteric for me," he said.

"It's just something I sense. I don't listen to you really."

"Well, thank you very much."

"You know what I mean, Mr. Mason."

"Of course, I do, but it's all very tenuous." His vocabulary was very refined in those days.

"It's what I feel," she said. "I feel it very strongly." She walked out of the office one day and walked in again ten years later. Mason had thought about her from time to time, and after five years or so of thinking decided he should have fucked her. It would have been statutory rape then, and his wife might have had him thrown in jail. But, then, she might have divorced him. Who knows?

"Hello, Mr. Mason," she said when she came back.

"Long coffee break," Mason said.

"I was trying for the record," she said.

"My wife set that," Mason said. "She went out in aught and fifty and isn't back yet. Still on the payroll. Twenty-two years. You're just a piker but I'm glad to see you."

"I'm glad to see you, too, Mr. Mason," she said.

"Perhaps we can drop that Mr. Mason stuff," Mason said.

"OK."

"Unless you're coming back to work, of course."

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"No, I don't think so."

"Too bad."

"You might say we have some unfinished business, though," she said.

"You might say that," Mason said. So they finished—or began—it that afternoon. He had had a lot of time to think about it.

And that was what at last had brought him into court after twenty years—more—of marriage. He thought he had discovered what it was all about. He went around smiling at people. People even smiled at him. He thought he had discovered what he was really like. He wasn't Old Gruff and Grim after all. Not that he was exactly an enchanted prince, although he felt pretty fine most of the time. A weight that had been on his shoulders fell off—a house, a wife, children, a business, all fell off and rolled away somewhere out of sight. He straightened up and looked around him. He walked on the balls of his feet. A new man—a rediscovered man. At once he wanted to make an honest woman of Sandy, but she didn't see it that way at all.

"Marry?" she said. "After ten rotten years of rotten marriage? I'd have to be crazy."

"Oh," Mason said. He hadn't thought about it that way. He guessed he was an incurable romantic.

"'I'm the incurable romantic," she said. "I keep thinking there's got to be something better than marriage."

The question proved to be academic in any case, because his wife laughed at the idea of divorce. "Keep your whore," she said. "I'm keeping the house and the car and the pay check and the insurance and the retirement and the social security and Medicare and Medicaid and the 11th *Britannica*."

"What do I get?" Mason said foolishly.

"Fair is fair," she said. "You get what you want, and I get what I want."

So there they sat week after week in court while the lawyers got what they wanted.

The street he was walking along was very quiet. It wasn't a through street. There were stop signs at every corner. The trees were large and old. In places the brick sidewalks were completely overgrown by grass. The small clapboard houses were close to the sidewalk but very private with large vine covered porches.

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At first Mason had to go on living at home. His wife kept all the money, and he couldn't afford to live anywhere else. Sometimes Sandy took him out to dinner when her alimony check came in, but mostly he ate at home, which wasn't as bad as it might have been, because his wife rarely spoke to him and wouldn't eat with him. At least he didn't have to listen to her jaw click as she chewed. It wasn't perfect but it was still a lot better than before Sandy.

He was better. Even when fits of his old despair returned, he knew he was better. He laughed sometimes—he laughed a lot. It was like old times with his own family when he was little. There had been laughter then. Sandy had changed him completely. He positively radiated, and he could prove it by the girl with the flowers.

That was a rainy afternoon in winter. He was walking home through the park from Sandy's. He was just going to go in and eat whatever his wife set before him and hang on to that island of joy square in the middle of himself. He was walking along in the rain, hanging on, wearing his old army poncho with his head as hidden as a monk's. Vaguely he was aware of someone overtaking him, but he didn't pay any attention until he heard a woman say, "Hold out your hands." Without thinking, he disengaged his hands from his poncho and held them out. Like magic they cradled a bowl of flowers. "I could tell you would like them," she said and went on. "Thank you," he whispered. It *was* like magic. She had had only a shapeless mass to go on as she overtook him. It had to be pure feeling. A month ago she would have run past screaming.

His wife didn't think much of the flowers. "*Flower Arranging I* at the University," she said. "Any fool can see that. She probably had a roomful already."

"Perhaps," he said, but he couldn't believe less in the magic.

"Or did your whore give them to you to butter me up with? Ugly arrangement."

"Perhaps," he said.

"Or has your whore run off with a younger stud at last, so you bought them for me yourself? How touching."

"Perhaps," he said. He was hanging on for dear life, but he was hanging on.

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He saw that he was about to pass an old VW bus parked at the curb. He recognized it now. He had walked here at night. There were two hounds that lived in the bus and sprang out as he passed. They scared him stiff. Now, he rather wished they would spring out. He'd like to see how they reacted. He must be giving off a really lovely stink—terror added to despair—but it was always possible that the dogs would sense something else, something even he couldn't be sure of. But the bus was empty, although the stench of the dogs sickened him as he passed. Maybe they only work at night, he thought, but he wasn't sure if he was relieved or disappointed.

"It's crazy," he said to Sandy. "This whole business is crazy. I can't sit down in the middle of a field without having a kitten in my lap within seconds. I'll bet if I tried to cross Times Square at 3 AM some nice old lady would grab my arm and see me across."

"That's a crock of shit," Sandy said.

"What's a crock of shit?" Mason said. Knowing her had done something to his vocabulary.

"That feeling business is a crock of shit."

"I learned it from you," he said.

"The body replaces each and every cell within seven years," she said. "I am not the person you learned it from."

"Oh," he said, "I thought it was you."

"You have a lot to learn," she said. She was right, of course. He could only be humble.

He had his own opinion, however. And things were improving. Not fast enough to suit him but definitely improving. Especially since the judge had allowed him to keep a little of his check, enough for a cheap apartment and a pound of hamburg now and them. He had thought it might be easier if he and Sandy pooled their hamburg, shared an apartment, but she wasn't ready to live with anyone. In a way he was grateful. He was grateful at night when he was too tired to be polite to anyone and when he needed the whole bed to toss in. He was grateful when he was too awful in the morning. And he was grateful when he just wanted to scratch himself and fart and go to sleep. He wanted to live with Sandy and would have sacrificed these luxuries for her, but he knew they were luxuries and enjoyed them. They were doing him good. Everything was doing him good.

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Take the spacey old man in the supermarket. Space calling to space. Mason had been working all night—spending afternoons with Sandy had put him behind in his work. He thought he would just buy himself a little liver for breakfast—another luxury of living alone. His wife never gave him liver because she didn't like the smell. Everything was very clear and deep in the early morning light. He felt he was walking just a little off the floor, perhaps enough to slide a sheet of paper under the soles of his boots. He didn't think anyone would notice, but as he was struggling to free a grocery cart from the stack, an old man came up and said, "Howdy."

"Oh," Mason said, freeing his cart at last, "lovely morning, isn't it?"

The old man took a cart and came along. "A little cold," he said.

Mason was uneasy with people who said *howdy*. Either they had you sized up or they were hiding behind it like a beard. The old man had a beard, too, but he looked very much the real thing. "Seasonal," Mason said.

"Time to buy seed for my birds," the old man said. "They'll be back any day now."

"Yes, indeed," Mason said, moving on.

"I must feed a hundred during the winter," the old man said, keeping pace. "They'll be back soon. The teal have gone. I saw two flights. They're the first."

"Early for geese," Mason said. He wondered how the old man knew that the one nice thing he took when he moved out of the house was his binoculars, his good bird glasses and the handmade case he had designed himself.

"The geese hang on until the last minute," the old man said. He stopped beside the sacks of bird seed.

"Sometimes even after," Mason said. He stopped too. "I've seen some waxwings."

"What do you know?" the old man said. "I guess I missed them this year. Glad to hear of them, though."

"Have a good winter," Mason said. He went off toward the meats.

"Same to you," the old man called. "Lots of birds."

Mason waited at a corner for a car to pass, but it sat at the stop

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sign until he reluctantly looked at the driver and was waved ahead. Coincidence, he said to himself. Just a lonely old man wanting someone to talk to. There was no help there. It had been an awful day. He was awful.

"Would you like to see the eclipse?" someone said. Mason kept going. But he glanced at the sky involuntarily. The sky had cleared. There was going to be an eclipse, almost a total eclipse. It would be visible after all. There had been something about it in the paper, but he had paid little attention. Perhaps it was taking place right now. He knew better than to look at the sun, though.

"Take the glass," his mother said, "and hold it carefully by the edges. Don't rub the smoke off, or the sun will hurt your eyes." They were standing in the driveway between the two houses to keep out of the wind. The sun looked very strange through the dark glass. It was a dark disk with a bright crown. "This is very educational," his mother said. She put her arm around him and drew him tight against the cold fur of her coat. It was soft and smelled lovely like her closet.

"I say, would you like to see the eclipse?" the voice said again. Although it couldn't be speaking to him, Mason stopped. There was no one else who could be spoken to. There was no one who could be speaking. He looked all around carefully and was about to go on when he caught a slight movement among the vine leaves on the nearest porch. Then he saw an old man's face peering out at him. My god, he thought, am I getting to be a crazy old man myself? Can they smell me?

"Would you?" the old man said. He skipped down the steps.

"Why, yes," Mason said. "I would. Yes," he said, "I really would."

"I've made a device," the old man said. "I saw how to do it in the paper." He was a thin, straight old man, very shabby. Mason guessed a professor retired so long ago that his pension had become almost worthless. "Look," he said. He held up a cardboard box, long and narrow. It was rather like a periscope.

"Yes," Mason said. He handled it gently. He was impressed. He knew he could never make a periscope from directions in the paper. Sometimes he was discouraged by things like that, but now the old man's pleasure outweighed everything.

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"Point the top at the sun and look down at the bottom." Mason studied the white paper at the bottom of the box, straining for something too faint for him to see. The old man placed both delicate hands on the device and moved it slightly.

"Yes," Mason said. "Yes, there it is." And there it was, a small but perfect image of the sun with a small but perfect bite out of the side.

"It's wonderful," Mason said.

"Isn't it?" the old man said.

"I don't know how to thank you," Mason said. "I had forgotten all about it and would have missed it completely." He handed the periscope back to the old man, who received it lightly on his outstretched palms. "I must be getting on," he said. It was nearly time to call Sandy to report that nothing had happened again. It was only what they expected, but he had to hear her say it didn't matter.

The old man took another look at the sun. Mason looked, too. They said goodbye.

As he went back through the dappled shade, he thought, It *is* all right. It's not awful at all.

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RICHARD WILBUR

Poetry's Debt to Poetry[1]

I REMEMBER A DINNER PARTY at a house in Cambridge, years ago. Almost everyone at the table that evening could be considered some sort of an artist, and it occurred to our host to suggest that we all testify, in turn, as to how we had first felt the call to practise one art or another. To tell the truth, I have forgotten most of the testimony, but I do recall what kind of thing was said. The novelist, let's suppose, had come across a set of Trollope in a summerhouse; the composer had heard Caruso on the gramophone, or an organist practising Bach in an empty church; the portrait-painter, perhaps, had gone with his mother to call on Mr. Sargent in his studio. It was all like that. Not one of the deponents had anything to say about the turmoil of first love, the song of the thrush, or the Bay of Naples. What had started them off as artists, they said, were no such approved stimuli, but the encounter with art itself. Astonished by a poem, a painting, a fugue, they had wanted to make something like *that*.

The fact that art is provoked by art should not surprise us; it is, after all, in a general view of nature, a very peculiar and acquired thing to sing an aria or weave a tapestry. An old Kansas farmer, who disagreed with Darwin, once said to me, "Son, you go get yourself a monkey, and put him in a cage, and sit there and watch him; and when he turns into a man, you come tell me." I didn't make the proposed experiment, but if I had, and if the monkey had turned into a man, I wouldn't then have sat and waited for the man to compose a sestina. Some poetry of great power was once written by a man in a cage—by Ezra Pound, at Pisa; but he was a cultured man of this late century, with a specific poetic calling, who wrote in communion with the long-developed art of many ages, aiming to make it new.

It doesn't suffice, of course, to speak of art exclusively as inherited matter and traditional artifice. Such a view would take

[1] This essay was given as the Joseph Warren Beach Memorial Lecture, at the University of Minnesota, on 27 April 1972.

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too little note of our ever-present adaptive need to re-shape the past; and it would slight the fact of individual genius. Sir Kenneth Clark tells us that art history knows no influence which could account for the dramatic expressiveness of Giotto; it appears that Giotto was in that respect simply original, and we are glad to hear it. Furthermore, we know that a work of art is not merely a finished conventional object but also an instrument—a means of articulating the spirit of a time or a people, a means of converting raw life, as it comes, into experience, and of embodying personal passion and wisdom. Out of such a sense of his function, Wordsworth denounced artifice and rule, and held that a poem should grow organically, like the Meadow-flower or Forest-tree; the apparent joke is that he said all this in a perfectly constructed sonnet. Emerson wrote scornfully of mere technical felicity, and called for a poetry of prophetic inspiration; accordingly, though he could write so finished a poem as the "Concord Hymn," he roughened his verse to make it seem spontaneous, and fell at times into a spasmodic doggerel. Blake, if I am not mistaken, was another prophet who cultivated an expressive raggedness. The fact is, I think, that all good poets are also anti-poets—or, as John Peale Bishop said, that all poets are both conservative and radical. Any healthy imagination will rebel against art in some sense and in some degree, because it is laborious and solitary, and cheats the artist of common things, because it tends toward escapism, because it pretends to fill the place of politics and religion and doesn't, or because it so often takes the artist's freshest inspirations and suffocates them with conventional language and technique. All such objections are true, or may be; but as for the last it is also true, as Yeats said, that the soul which would sing must study "monuments of its own magnificence," must go to school to the masters. When Blake wished to shake off the smooth manner which he had so beautifully exemplified in his poem "To The Muses," he didn't merely snatch a new style out of the air, but turned back also to Elizabethan models. Some relationship to some tradition, and the devising of an excellent style appropriate to one's vision, are not to be avoided; I was pleased when Richard Howard, not long ago, criticized Allen Ginsberg's cult of artless genius by quoting William Blake as follows: "In-

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vention depends Altogether upon Execution or Organisation; as that is right or wrong, so is the Invention perfect or imperfect. Whoever is set to undermine the Execution of Art is set to destroy Art." Effective "artlessness," then, is just another style; and all revolutions in art are palace revolutions.

What I want to talk about, here, are a few examples of the indebtedness of art to art, and the fascinating difficulty of finding words for describing such indebtedness. Let's begin with the phenomenon at its most trivial, as it may appear in the so-called art of conversation. A host asks his guest what he will have to drink, and the guest replies, "What I want is a Martini; but it would be a far, far better thing for me to have a gin-and-tonic." Certainly the guest is not seriously referring to Dickens' Sydney Carton ascending the scaffold; he is merely being playful in a mild and perfunctory way. An hour later, when the host's memories of Shakespeare have been blurred by drink, he ushers his guest into the dining-room, saying, "Lead on, Macduff." It would be wrong of the guest to read into that familiar misquotation any allusion to the murderous hospitality of Macbeth.

Conversation is full of the sort of reminiscence I have just illustrated. There is a higher plane, the plane of learning and wit, on which references are deliberately and pertinently made, and styles are knowledgeably taken on or off; but we do most of our talking well below that level, on a plane where echoes of literary phrase or manner mean very little, and seem intended chiefly to relieve banality of thought, as carbonation is felt to add gaiety to a poor wine.

In written art, it is certainly amongst the titles of novels that we find the most meaningless cases of borrowing. Consider these lines from Ernest Dowson's most celebrated poem:

> I have forgot much, Cynara! gone with the wind,
> Flung roses, roses, riotously with the throng,
> Dancing, to put thy pale, lost lilies out of mind. . . .

It seems a safe bet that Margaret Mitchell's *Gone With the Wind* lifted its title from that passage, but the borrowed words, as they apply to Miss Mitchell's Civil War novel, have nothing whatever to do with Dowson's lurid poem, whether in theme or in tone, and

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they are even different in grammar.[2] Similarly, there is little but confusion to be gained by turning from Thomas Wolfe's *Look Homeward, Angel* to that passage of "Lycidas" which furnished him the title. I am not attacking Margaret Mitchell or Thomas Wolfe: I am simply observing that what publishers of novels call a "good title" is often a resonant phrase full of thematic largeness, which, though it has a vague air of previous success, is now quite divorced from its first context.

But let me talk now of artistic debts which mean something, and which might profitably be noticed by critic or scholar. I shall speak largely of poetry from here on, because that's presumably my province. When one poet has been prompted by another, he will sometimes say so flatly in capital letters, as when Wallace Stevens entitles a poem, "Variations on a Theme by Williams." Similarly, the dedication of a poem to another poet will often amount to a public I.O.U., and the light-verse writer who adapts another's idea to a fresh occasion may subtitle his poem "With Apologies to So-and-So." The uses of the epigraph in poetry or prose are varied; epigraphs are often subtle, oblique in their operation, and hard to describe; yet it stands to reason that most epigraphs are, in part, acknowledgements. To take a famous instance, Eliot prefaced his poem *The Hollow Men* with two quotations, one of which goes "Mistah Kurtz—he dead." What the quotation asks is that we call to mind the whole drift of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness,* and in particular the horror of Kurtz's moral emptiness at the close, and that we then use our memory of the novel as a pitch-pipe whereby to key our reading of the Eliot poem which follows. An additional effect of that epigraph, I think, is to declare that the art and thought of Eliot were beholden to the art and thought of Conrad. Acknowledgement may also take the form of homage or invocation, and here I helplessly think of Whitman: what poet has been more saluted and summoned in this century than he? Ezra Pound, overcoming an early resistance, hails him filially as the poet who "broke the new wood;"

[2] A hearer of this lecture kindly pointed out to me the following two sentences in Joyce's *Ulysses,* page 141: "Gone with the wind. Hosts at Mullaghmast and Tara of the Kings." A correspondent of the *Atlantic,* in the April 1973 issue, cites the same passage in the same connection. It appears that Joyce adapted Dowson's words to his own purposes, associating them with Tara, and that Miss Mitchell's novel, for *its* purposes, then borrowed from Joyce.

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Hart Crane, in the Hatteras section of *The Bridge,* gropes explicitly for Walt's hand and vision; and Theodore Roethke, in his poem "The Abyss," cries out, "Be with me, Whitman, maker of catalogues."

And then there is quotation within the body of a text: the poems of Marianne Moore are full of scrupulous inverted commas, and Elizabeth Bishop, seeing the glittering water at Wellfleet, is reminded of a phrase of Herbert's and writes, "the sea is 'all a case of knives'," putting the last five words into quotes. There are some words which we may dare to quote without quotation marks—*incarnadine,* for example; we know who the only begetter of that word was, and when it appears in any verse or sentence it brings the thought of Shakespeare with it. Nor did Thoreau have to use quotes in this description of the swamps to which he sometimes rambled,

> where the swamp-pink and dogwood grow, the red alder-berry glows like eyes of imps, the waxwork grooves and crushes the hardest wood in its folds, and the wild-holly berries make the beholder forget his home with their beauty, and he is dazzled and tempted by nameless other wild forbidden fruits, too fair for mortal taste.

There is a glancing reminiscence of *Comus* in that passage, but what we most hear are the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*—"Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit/ Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste/ Brought death into the world . . ." In speaking of "wild forbidden fruits, too fair for mortal taste," Thoreau is playfully shifting Milton's words about, and modifying their senses: it reminds me of the way jazz musicians of the thirties used to toss a phrase from one tune into their rendition of another. But in evoking Milton and Milton's thought, Thoreau is also saying, with majesty and economy, that the ponds and woods of the Concord region are paradisal, holy, and too ambrosial for the senses of degraded man.

All these open admissions of poetic indebtedness are attractive and useful; they remind us that art is ultimately a loose collective enterprise, and they tell something of the particular writer by exposing his affinities. Still, they must not be taken too simple-mindedly: it is not of much interest to assign Ezra Pound to something called "The Whitman Tradition," and let

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it go at that. Pound's poem of capitulating praise should move its commentator to discern what in Whitman Pound could actually use, what was not to his purpose, and what he still couldn't stand. Literary historians, in their taxonomic fury, often talk as if the process of influence were like decalcomania, as if writers simply copied each other's productions, as Macy's might match Gimbel's in item and price; but such is not the case, and that character in Borges who was so influenced by Cervantes as to write *Don Quixote,* is fictitious. To be sure, there are people other than scribes, plagiarists and forgers, who copy art or try to; they are not in the full sense artists, and they can't help it. Think of those who have aped the spare and additive Hemingway sentence, without having the peculiarly resigned sense of life which required it; or those who, with no apparent sense of its function, have copied that long Faulkner sentence which is so suitable for conveying simultaneities of awareness and action. And what of all those instant Welshmen of twenty years ago, who dropped everything and wrote in the distinctive rhapsodic manner of Dylan Thomas? We can't remember their names, and the reason we can't is that Wordsworth was right: art must grow naturally, like a plant, from its own roots and in its own soil and climate. A plant may be pruned or trained or grafted to advantage, but only within the limits of its own nature. The saddest epitaph I have ever heard was spoken by Robert Frost; he said of another writer, "He wanted to be me." It is fatal for a writer to have one hero only; submitting to a single model, admiring but one syntax and lexicon, means that you will say what you don't mean, and that you will never find the right words for what you do mean. A commanding imagination, as many have said before me, steals not from one writer but selectively from all writers, taking whatever will help in the articulation of its own sense of things.

In this connection, the most precarious of the fine poets of our century was Theodore Roethke. The poems of his first book, *Open House,* are noticeably affected by certain woman poets whose work he loved—Louise Bogan, Elinor Wylie, Léonie Adams. Roethke was well aware of the fact, and in his essay "How to Write Like Somebody Else," he accounted for the fact in a remarkable way, saying that his early work had been touched

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by a compulsion to praise; out of his admiration for Léonie Adams, he said, he had felt driven "to create something that would honor her in her own terms." In the shorter poems of Roethke's next period, especially the wonderful greenhouse. pieces, I find no moments of celebratory imitation, and the voice seems entirely the poet's own; the long poems of that time, such as "The Shape of the Fire," have, as Roethke put it, certain "ancestors"—among them Mother Goose, the songs and rants in Elizabethan and Jacobean plays, Thomas Traherne, and (I should think) James Joyce and the psychology of Jung. But whatever means he may have borrowed for these poems of psychic struggle, of regression and rebirth, everything had been mastered and turned to his own fresh purposes. If the poems sometimes fail through a too unmediated subjectivity, they are nevertheless powerfully original. And therefore it is a shock to find Roethke, in the next phase of his work, succumbing frequently and totally to the style of William Butler Yeats, so much so that in one poem he must declare with a certain bravado,

> I take this cadence from a man named Yeats;
> I take it, and I give it back again. . . .

The candor is disarming, but still one feels like answering, *Why?* When Roethke writes in the voice of Yeats, the results are often felicitous, as in the stunning poem from which I have just quoted, and yet one is disquieted, as by those free translations in which Robert Lowell makes Rilke sound like Lowell, and provides him with additional stanzas. One thinks, "This is good, but what is it?" In cases of this kind it is impossible not to be nagged by the question of authenticity, the question of who, after all, is talking.

Delmore Schwartz, writing in 1959, asked himself why an exceptional poet, at the height of his powers, should take to imitating Yeats, and concluded that Roethke's chief reason was probably "to guard against the deadly habit of self-imitation." I think that may have been part of the story. I also think—indeed, I know—that his marriage in the early 1950's gave Roethke a new entrée to life calling for a new poetic vein, a vein which he could not at once invent. There are poets for whom the discovery of style is easy, because their purchase on the world is

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rational and social, and therefore readily expressed in some version of urbane discourse. But Roethke was not a rational, social poet; the great spur of his poetry was a romantic longing to escape the bounds of self, to escape the rational mind and its estranging formulations, and to become at one with the whole of life through communion and vision. A poetry of the sub-verbal and the supra-verbal, which pursues the wordless through the wordless, doesn't find its true voice, or modify that voice, without some floundering and casting-about.

One thing which moves a poet to translate from other tongues, as I know from my own experience, is the urge to broaden his utterance through imposture, to say things which he is not yet able to say in his own person. That sounds disgraceful, but it needn't be. You can't translate, after all, without having an affinity for the original. If you bring over the ghazals of Saadi into English, as one of my students is doing, then you have done three things: you have improved the English reader's access to the genius of Persia, you have provided English poetry with some new Persian tricks, and you have rendered more articulate that part of you which resembles Saadi. It was something like this last result, I think, which came of Roethke's impersonation of Yeats. What was it that Yeats could offer Roethke? Technically, he offered a muscular and often end-stopped pentameter line which Roethke was equipped to exploit—for Roethke was, above all, a poet of the striking line. Yeats offered also a ruggedly vatic style in which such words as "soul" could sound convincing and modern, in which one could get away with talking of visions, of "Heaven blazing into the head," and of that beatitude called "unity of being," wherein self and world miraculously agree. Furthermore, and much to Roethke's purpose, Yeats offered a physical mysticism of the dancing body and of the marriage-bed. Many of Roethke's Yeatsian poems succeed; some fail, as Yeats himself could fail, through the blustering rhetorical question, the wilful transport, the mantic resolution which does not ring true. In any case, Roethke's impersonation of Yeats seems to me to have kept him talking; to have limbered, emboldened and extended him, so that he became capable of those last poems which are better than ever and so much more his own.

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Am I right about all that? Heaven knows. Let us agree that such a case is infinitely interesting and problematical, and proceed to other business.

Every now and then one is astonished by stumbling upon the unfamiliar antecedent of some familiar style. That happened to me recently when I read for the first time Winthrop Mackworth Praed's poem, "The Vicar." Praed was a witty English poet of the early 19th century, but he reminds me, and will surely remind you if he hasn't already, of an American poet of the early 20th. Here is a sample stanza of "The Vicar":

> His talk was like a stream, which runs
> With rapid change from rocks to roses:
> It slipped from politics to puns,
> It passed from Mahomet to Moses;
> Beginning with the laws which keep
> The planets in their radiant courses,
> And ending with some precept deep
> For dressing eels, or shoeing horses.

We think first, perhaps, of particular lines by Edwin Arlington Robinson, such as:

> The beauty, shattered by the laws
> Which have creation in their keeping,
> No longer trembles at applause,
> Or over children who are sleeping. . . .

And then, perhaps, we recall that the eight-line stanza in which Praed describes his village vicar is very like the stanza which Robinson so frequently favored for the description of the citizens of his fictitious Tilbury Town. The eight-line tetrameter stanza, as used by him and by Praed, tends to have a jaunty rocking or balancing movement within the line, often stressed by alliteration, as well as balancings between line and line, between pairs of lines, and between the first four lines and the second. Through all these rockings, great and small, there flows a supple, sustained, and rather virtuoso grammar, which somehow produces all the necessary rhymes at the right junctures, and completes its thought precisely at the stanza's close: it is like a long, undulant

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line of deft skaters, who crack the whip and swing 'round to end in a circle. Here is one more of Praed's stanzas about the Vicar:

His sermon never said or showed
That Earth is foul, that Heaven is gracious,
Without refreshment on the road
From Jerome, or from Athanasius:
And sure a righteous zeal inspired
The hand and head that penned and planned them,
For all who understood admired,
And some who did not understand them.

We all know Robinson, and there is no need to hammer the point home with parallel passages. Robinson plainly owes something to Praed's piece of village portraiture, in respect of technique and tone and details of language, and I find that I am not the first to notice it. A trip to the library revealed that someone else had noticed these things thirty years ago, and I was glad to have his support of my quite independent discovery. When we suddenly come upon such an indebtedness as this, it is likely to shake up our tidy conceptions of classification and magnitude. Praed, after all, was a fine light-verse poet, or a writer of what is called *vers de société*; if Robinson derives in some part from him, may it not be that Robinson is less serious and less major than we have imagined? Well, what is it to be major? In a recent *New Yorker,* Auden praises Housman warmly, yet considers him a minor poet because he did not develop—because the late work is scarcely distinguishable from the early. I should not know how to apply that criterion to George Herbert, because he did so much of his work within a period of three years; and I hesitate also to apply it to Robinson: his work did change, but since by and large it changed for the worse, the fact of change does not seem to enhance his case. I wonder if an alternative measure of stature might not be the extent to which any poet has given sustained, forceful and original treatment to a theme of some consequence? If that will do as a criterion, I will say with Roy Harvey Pearce that Robinson does have a large theme —that he is the poet of the breakdown of community in American society, and points again and again to that ignorance of the hearts of others, and consequent ignorance of self, which result from the

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substitution of the cash nexus for other and more humane forms of relationship. There are poems like "Miniver Cheevy" which, taken by themselves, seem dexterous, amusing, but not inexhaustible; taken in quantity, however, Robinson adds up at the very least to a consistent and serious view of things. Therefore whatever he owes to Praed should work one way in Praed and another way in Robinson, as lemon has one character in lemonade and another in hollandaise. I think that's just what happens. At his best, Robinson takes forms whose rhymes and rhythms would in other hands be tricky, and converts them to the music of obsession, of fatality, and of that wryness and irony which his outlook entailed.

I draw two morals from this matter of Robinson and Praed, and one is that poets do not always go about being influenced in the way in which critics and scholars would have them do. Critics and scholars, if I may be flippant about them for a moment, like literature to be organized sensibly in schools and streams—on the one hand, the Sons of Ben, on the other the Spenserians; they think it convenient for writers to be explainable by reference to immediate forerunners and major contemporaries. How wistfully scholars speak of the possibility that the paths of Milton and Donne may have crossed, when Milton was an adolescent student at St. Paul's, and Donne was dean of the Cathedral; but if it happened, it brought nothing about, and Milton went stubbornly on to elect such outlandish influences as Cardinal Bembo. It is always that way with the best poets—they don't travel in gangs, and they make surprising decisions as to who shall teach them. Not all our hindsight can make it seem predictable that Ezra Pound, in such and such a year, should have turned to Gautier for inspiration. In America today, there are critics of poetry prepared to tell us whither we are tending and just who the dominant influences are; and there is truth and interest in what they say; nevertheless, if you were to creep up behind some really good young poet on the street, you might well hear him muttering something unauthorized like Catullus, Whittier, or Coventry Patmore.

My second point may be quickly made. We have gradually put behind us, during the last two centuries, that notion of decorum which would prescribe for a given subject its proper

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form and diction. In late generations poets have made more and more use, for serious purposes, of light, popular, slangy, or otherwise non-elevated means: obvious examples would be Louis MacNeice's use of jazz language and movement, the indebtedness of Eliot's "Sweeney Agonistes" to the music-hall, and the amazing rhetorical inclusiveness of John Berryman's *Dream Songs*. It is because Robinson's relationship to Praed is such a subtle and threshold instance of this tendency that I find it so intriguing.

Now I should like to read you a ballad written in 1803 by the English poet and lyricist Thomas Moore. It is called "The Lake of the Dismal Swamp," and it's based on the story of a young man of Norfolk, Virginia, who went mad with grief because of the death of his beloved. He developed the delusion that the girl was not dead, but had gone into the nearby Dismal Swamp, and when he vanished one day and never came back, it was assumed that the boggy wilderness had claimed him. You must imagine that the first two stanzas of Moore's ballad are spoken by the distraught young man.

"They made her a grave, too cold and damp
  For a soul so warm and true;
And she's gone to the Lake of the Dismal Swamp,
Where, all night long, by a fire-fly lamp,
  She paddles her white canoe.

"And her fire-fly lamp I soon shall see,
  And her paddle I soon shall hear;
Long and loving our life shall be,
And I'll hide the maid in a cypress tree,
  When the footstep of death is near."

Away to the Dismal Swamp he speeds—
  His path was rugged and sore,
Through tangled juniper, beds of reeds,
Through many a fen, where the serpent feeds,
  And man never trod before.

And, when on earth he sunk to sleep,
  If slumber his eyelids knew,
He lay, where the deadly vine doth weep

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Its venomous tear and nightly steep
  The flesh with blistering dew!

And near him the she-wolf stirr'd the brake,
  And the copper-snake breathed in his ear,
Till he starting cried, from his dream awake,
"Oh! when shall I see the dusky Lake,
  And the white canoe of my dear?"

He saw the Lake, and a meteor bright
  Quick over its surface play'd—
"Welcome," he said, "my dear one's light!"
And the dim shore echoed, for many a night,
  The name of the death-cold maid.

Till he hollow'd a boat of the birchen bark,
  Which carried him off from shore;
Far, far he follow'd the meteor spark,
The wind was high and the clouds were dark,
  And the boat return'd no more.

But oft, from the Indian hunter's camp,
  This lover and maid so true
Are seen at the hour of midnight damp
To cross the Lake by a fire-fly lamp
  And paddle their white canoe!

If we ask ourselves why that ballad sounds like a parody, it soon occurs to us that Edward Lear, who parodied such forgotten poems as this, has intervened between us and Moore, with the odd and anachronistic result that Moore's ballad, when we happen on it, sounds to us like a muted and less outrageous version of Lear. Listen to these lines from the last stanza of Edward Lear's "The Jumblies:"

And in twenty years they all came back,
  In twenty years or more,
And everyone said, "How tall they've grown!
For they've been to the Lakes, and the Torrible Zone,
  And the hills of the Chankly Bore. . . ."

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We could stick that into Moore's poem at any point and, though it might confuse the narrative, it would be almost perfectly in agreement with the stanza form of the ballad, its tripping sonority, and its spooky tone. Then as for vocabulary and phrasing, one feels that Lear's *Nonsense Songs* could easily yield a dozen close approximations of such a line as Moore's "Far, far he follow'd the meteor spark"—not to mention that other mournful line, "And the boat return'd no more." Lear mimics and exaggerates Moore's poem, or poems of its kind, in mood and movement, in language and technique; and once one has registered these things, one then reflects on something still more striking—the degree to which Lear's customary plots resemble this plot of Thomas Moore's. I think particularly of "The Dong with a Luminous Nose." The scenery of that poem is also exotic, wild, and nocturnal, with strange flora and fauna. The Dong, we are told, was once happily in love with a beautiful Jumbly girl, but she sailed away and left him on the shore. Whereupon, Lear tells us, the Dong went mad with grief and loneliness:

> But when the sun was low in the West,
> The Dong arose and said,—
> "What little sense I once possessed
> Has quite gone out of my head!"
> And since that day he wanders still
> By lake and forest, marsh and hill,
> Singing—"O somewhere, in valley or plain,
> Might I find my Jumbly Girl again!
> Forever I'll seek by lake and shore
> Till I find my Jumbly Girl once more!"

Then, as you'll remember, he constructs a long artificial nose containing a lamp, to light his steps during his nightlong wanderings: it is not much more improbable than the firefly lamp imagined by the mad youth of Moore's poem, and it too, by the way, is likened to a meteor. But let me not press too hard for detailed resemblances: it is enough to notice how similar the two stories are, even in their final tableaux, and to remember also, if you will, how characteristic the Dong is of the figures whom we find in Lear's poems. When they are not animals, like the Owl and the Pussycat, or inanimate objects like the Table and the

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Chair, they are grotesque persons like the blue-and-green Jumblies or the Quangle Wangle Quee. There are moments of happiness in the lives of these characters, but in general such happiness is fugitive in both senses of the word; for the most part, their experiences are sad. They are deprived, as the Pobble of his toes or the Yonghy-Bonghy-Bò of his beloved; they are often lonely, deserted, and weary; others have gone away and not returned, and they themselves are moved, like the Nutcrackers and the Sugar-Tongs, to fade away and never come back.

T. S. Eliot once observed that he could think of no poet, other than Lear, who appeared to have based his style on a study of Edgar Allan Poe. It is certainly easy to catch Lear writing with Poe in mind: if we turn to "Incidents in the Life of my Uncle Arly," we find Lear telling how once, when Uncle Arly stooped down to pick up a railway-ticket, a pea-green cricket settled on his nose. The next three lines read as follows:

> Never—never more—oh! never,
> Did that Cricket leave him ever,—
> Dawn or evening, day or night. . . .

Needless to say, Lear's adhesive cricket is a joke about Poe's raven, who croaked "Nevermore" and likewise never left. It could similarly be shown that, both in form and in tenor, Lear imitated and parodied Tennyson. Let me now ask what these three chosen influences have in common—Poe, Tennyson, and the Tom Moore who wrote "The Lake of the Dismal Swamp." In respect of technique, all three are alike in that they could write balladic poems of a strongly musical and haunting character, and it was such verse which Lear felt drawn to imitate and distort. But furthermore, and quite as importantly, all three wrote on occasion weird, exotic and morbid poems on those painful themes which underlie so much of Lear's nonsense—isolation, unbearable loss, abandonment, weariness, the wish to fade out of the world. Moore's mad young man, Tennyson's Mariana, Poe's lost Lenore and her lover all have their queer relatives on the Coast of Coromandel and the great Gromboolian plain. I am aware that I am now inviting the rage of those who would have all humor jolly and shallow, and who interrupt one to say, "You seem to forget that nonsense is *funny*." But such people lack the

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discernment of children, who always know that Lear's poems are a very rich mix indeed. He is for one thing a parodist, which a literate child can at least partly perceive; secondly, he is a fine and catchy versifier, whom children very quickly get by heart; thirdly, he is a violent and fantastic humorist, and all children laugh with him; finally, he is a poet of heartbreak, and I have known him to move my children to tears. When I think of Edward Lear, I am sometimes put in mind of those characters in Russian novels who express their pain and humiliation through buffoonery. Or maybe a better comparison would be to that grotesque and lovely man Jimmy Durante, who ends his performances by saying, with a Thespian sweep of his arm, "Good night, Mrs. Calabash, wherever you are!" If I'm not mistaken, that is at once parodistic, ludicrous, and touching.

Assuming that I have not talked nonsense about Edward Lear, it would plainly be insufficient merely to call him a parodist, because he differs so from other kinds of parodist. It is true that he pokes fun at certain poets, but it is also true that in so doing he expresses, in the only manner possible to his shy and quirky nature, a sympathy for their painful themes. With Louis Untermeyer, for example, the case is far simpler: when he shows us how "Little Boy Blue" might have sounded if written by Edna Millay, the mannerisms of Millay are amusingly magnified through their bestowal on a small subject, but the parodist does not express *himself* otherwise than by exhibiting his wit. Edmund Wilson's famous parody, "The Omelet of A. MacLeish," differs from the Untermeyer sort of thing in that it is vicious, and in that its material is the career of MacLeish adversely described in a travesty of MacLeish's style: ironically, such an attack can't avoid being in some part flattering, since it concedes that its victim has a distinct and memorable way of writing. It seems likely that parody works more simply and accountably in Wilson and Untermeyer than it does in Lear; and yet we must always be alert, in reading parodic poetry, for some ambiguities of motive and effect. Here, for example, is a little note which Randall Jarrell prefaced, in 1942, to his poem "The Country Was": "This," he said, "is supposed to be a parody of Miss Marianne Moore's poetry. I hope that it is accurate, admiring, and a little critical."

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There is a rare kind of imitative poetry for which I know no name. It is not parody, because it involves no mockery or broad caricature, no subversion by means of bathos. The Jarrell piece just mentioned comes close, in fact, to being the sort of thing I mean, but Auden's poem "Their Lonely Betters" is a pure specimen. In subject, "Their Lonely Betters" is a casual rumination about the difference between man and the other creatures, and about how language is suitably restricted to man. The first stanza goes like this:

> As I listened from a beach-chair in the shade
> To all the noises that my garden made,
> It seemed to me only proper that words
> Should be withheld from vegetables and birds.

That is colloquial and playful, but it is not exactly Auden's kind of colloquial play, and the voice grows stranger as we read into the second stanza and are told how

> . . . . rustling flowers for some third party waited
> To say which pairs, if any, should get mated.

There is a clear reminiscence, in that, of a poem by Frost called "A Winter Eden," and it begins to dawn on the reader that Auden's poem, in title, theme, attitude and style, is far more Frost than it is Auden. In the fourth and last stanza Auden gracefully lets us know what he has been up to, when he says of birds and flowers,

> Let them leave language to their lonely betters
> Who count some days and long for certain letters;
> We, too, make noises when we laugh or weep;
> Words are for those with promises to keep.

The poem closes with a frank echo of "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening," and thus declares its purpose: out of his admiration for Robert Frost, Auden has done his best to write a Frost poem on a Frost subject. John Malcolm Brinnin has produced several poems of a similar generosity; for example, his poem "A Thin Facade for Edith Sitwell" does not exaggerate Dame Edith's already flamboyant early style, but honors her by a strict emula-

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tion of it. Such performances are never weighty and major, but they are very hard to bring off, requiring as they do a lack of malice, a gift for self-effacement, and a mimetic faculty more exquisite perhaps than the parodist's. Small wonder that productions of the kind are rare, and that very able hands have sometimes failed in the effort to write them. Louise Bogan once published a poem called "Evening in the Sanitarium," with a subtitle reading "Imitated from Auden"; alas, Miss Bogan proved to be helplessly herself, and without the subtitle one would scarcely have guessed that she'd had Auden in mind. Fortunately, the piece was a superlative Bogan poem, and in later printings the subtitle was dispensed with, or relegated to a footnote.

We are now speaking of the kind of poetic response which arises from affection and professional respect, and I am reminded of two good poems the relationship of which has long intrigued me. One is by Delmore Schwartz, and goes like this:

> Tired and unhappy, you think of houses
> Soft-carpeted and warm in the December evening,
> While snow's white pieces fall past the window,
> And the orange firelight leaps.
>
> A young girl sings
> That song of Gluck where Orpheus pleads with Death;
> Her elders watch, nodding their happiness
> To see time fresh again in her self-conscious eyes:
> The servants bring the coffee, the children retire,
> Elder and younger yawn and go to bed,
> The coals fade and glow, rose and ashen,
> It is time to shake yourself! and break this
> Banal dream, and turn your head
> Where the underground is charged, where the weight
> Of the lean buildings is seen,
> Where close in the subway rush, anonymous
> In the audience, well-dressed or mean,
> So many surround you, ringing your fate,
> Caught in an anger exact as a machine!

Beginning with fatigue and sadness, Schwartz's poem moves off into a fantasy of comfort and familial happiness, from which at the close the "you" of the poem is brusquely awakened to face

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his real condition, as an anonymous person in a violent city. John Berryman's poem "Desires of Men and Woman" is a deliberate variation on this poem of Schwartz's. It is exactly one line longer; it, too, moves from unhappiness into fantasies of a gracious house and ordered life; and it, too, ends with a brutal awakening. Here is the poem:

> Exasperated, worn, you conjure a mansion,
> The absolute butlers in the spacious hall,
> Old silver, lace, and privacy, a house
> Where nothing has for years been out of place,
> Neither shoehorn nor affection been out of place,
> Breakfast in summer on the eastern terrace,
> All justice and all grace.
> At the reception
> Most beautifully you conduct yourselves—
> Expensive and accustomed, bow, speak French,
> That Cinquecento miniature recall
> The Duke presented to your great-grandmother—
>
> And none of us, my dears, would dream of you
> The half-lit and lascivious apartments
> That are in fact your goal, for which you'd do
> Murder if you had not your cowardice
> To prop the law; or dream of you the rooms,
> Glaring and inconceivably vulgar,
> Where now you are, where now you wish for life,
> Whence you project your naked fantasies.

I once asked Berryman in what spirit he had written a poem so strictly parallel to Schwartz's, and he told me that what he had intended was "both a tribute and a criticism." Of Berryman's deep admiration for Schwartz, and for the poem in question, there can be no doubt; it is also clear, given such admiration, that in criticizing Schwartz's poem Berryman was not trying to outdo him publicly, but simply to speak to him as poet to poet. Well, in what differences between the two poems might Berryman's criticism inhere? Metrically, Schwartz's poem is loose and varied; Berryman's stays close to the pentameter and is more vigorous in movement. The "you" addressed in Schwartz's poem

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may be less universal than the "you" of Berryman's, but of that I'm not sure. In Schwartz's poem, the fantasy is full of sentimental warmth, while in Berryman the dream is of elegance. Schwartz's language is less rhetorical than Berryman's, which has many clever appositions of abstract and concrete. All these differences are there to be noted, yet none seems to me to constitute Berryman's criticism of Schwartz: I find that criticism in the contrast between the awakenings with which the two poems terminate. When Schwartz's poem returns us to bitter reality, it is to a condition of loneliness in a dehumanized urban world. The corresponding statement in Berryman is that our condition is vulgar and sordid, and our *wishes* also: we don't truly long for order and grace, but rather for "half-lit and lascivious apartments." In short, what Berryman's poem says to Schwartz is this: our unhappiness, from which we sometimes flee into pathetic daydreams, derives not from our oppressive circumstances but from the corruption of our hearts.

The courteous conversing of one poem with another is artistic response at its best. When we think of Dante welcomed by the great pagan poets in Limbo, or of Yeats saying "I shall dine at end of day/ With Landor and with Donne," it is not literary chitchat which we imagine, but conversation of this perfected kind. I. A. Richards, in a brilliant talk, once showed Coleridge conversing with Wordsworth about inspiration in the metaphor of light, and Longfellow conversing with them both in the same figure. We have the thing at its most magnificent in "Lycidas," where Milton addresses the whole pastoral tradition, both honoring and transcending it. Let me offer as my last exhibit a singular instance of conversing.

Thomas Lovell Beddoes, that strange death-obsessed poet whom Ezra Pound rightly called the "prince of morticians," wrote at some time in the 1840's a poem called "The Phantom-Wooer." It is an uneven work which at times is mere Gothic grisliness, but the first lines of the second verse, which I want to read to you, are exceptionally beautiful. This is a ghost who loves a lady fair, and who is asking her to join him in death:

> Young soul, put off your flesh, and come
> With me into the quiet tomb;

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Our bed is lovely, dark, and sweet;
The earth will swing us, as she goes,
Beneath our coverlid of snows,
And the warm leaden sheet.

Hearing those lines, and especially the line "Our bed is lovely, dark, and sweet," it is impossible not to be reminded of the latter portion of Robert Frost's "Stopping by Woods," in which a winter traveller is somehow tempted by the roadside woods to forsake his journey. The horse, as you'll remember, is all for moving on:

He gives his harness bells a shake
To ask if there is some mistake.
The only other sound's the sweep
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep.
But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

In this portion of the poem, which depicts the snowy woods, there is no mention of *cold*. The characterizing words are *easy, downy, lovely, dark,* and *deep,* words which evoke just such a snowy coverlet and featherbed as were offered in Beddoes' poem, and which oblige Frost twice over to put away the thought of *sleep*. One evening in the late 1940's I asked Frost whether he was fond of Beddoes, and he said he was; but he said so with what seemed to me a warning glitter in his eye, and I didn't pursue the subject. But I was right then, and am right now, in believing that Frost's "Stopping by Woods" converses with a poem of Beddoes', declines its invitation, and pays its beauty the tribute of resistance. This is not to say that Frost's poem is about death; that would be a little crude; better to say that the poem is about impulses which we sometimes associate with the deep sleep of death—the luxurious thought of giving up the struggle, the temptation not to go on.

I have scarcely begun to count the ways in which poetry may be indebted or reactive to other poetry. There are poets, for instance, who treat certain predecessors as the priests of a secret doctrine,

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and I think I could show at fearful length that Yeats' volume *The Tower* is permeated with a profound understanding of Milton's companion poems, "L'Allegro" and "Il Penseroso." And I should love to try to say exactly what happens when the French poet Baudelaire takes the most celebrated quatrain of Gray's "Elegy" and turns it into the sestet of his sonnet *"Le Guignon."* But it seems about time to sum up and be still. I've said that art is prompted, in the first place, by other art, and that artists, however original, respond to other artists in various manners: by borrowing, theft, adaptation, translation, impersonation, parody, and so on. In discussing any particular case, I have found that such terms as these were seldom wholly adequate to the description of apparent motive and effect; we lack a handy vocabulary for describing what goes on in Edward Lear, for example, and it may be that in any challenging instance one must use an *ad hoc* and groping terminology. That does not, however, excuse the too cautious critic who tells us merely, "In this passage, Miss Brontë would seem to owe something to Byron." Any writer on literature who is afraid to use inference and a trained intuition is in the wrong racket. To attempt to define the nature of any literary debt is a chancy business, but it is one of infinite interest, and the truth of such matters is not beyond all conjecture. If you have found some of my conjectures interestingly wrong, I shall not mind; and if you feel that I have sometimes only scratched the surface—that much more might have been said—I shall feel that my point has been made.

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FREDRIC JAMESON

Wyndham Lewis as Futurist

1

> Sound and image sullenly mate; but the denser name doubly impending bears down the simulacrum.
> —*The Childermass*

To face the sentences of Wyndham Lewis is to find oneself in the presence of a principle of immense mechanical energy. Flaubert, *Ulysses,* are composed; the voices of a James or of a Faulkner develop their resources through some patient blind groping exploration of their personal idiosyncrasies from work to work. The style of Lewis, however, equally unmistakable, blasts through the tissues of his novels like a steam whistle, breaking them to its will.

For the machine-like, the artificial, knows a peculiar exaltation all its own: "a motor-car roaring at full speed, as though bearing down upon the machine-gun itself, is more beautiful than the *Victory of Samothrace,*" cried Marinetti in words that echoed around the world like the pulsing telegraph waves upon the emblematic globe of the old newsreels, words that seem to furnish the program for the *scène-à-faire* of Lewis' greatest novel. But for Lewis, as for so many others, Marinetti's Futurism has the liberating effect of an external and static symbol merely, a prophetic caricature of what the new twentieth-century linguistic apparatus will be able to register. For Lewis himself, indeed, there can be no question of opposing nature, or the organic, to the machine: "Every living form is a miraculous mechanism . . . , and every sanguinary, vicious and twisted need produces in Nature's workshop a series of mechanical arrangements extremely suggestive and interesting for the engineer, and almost invariably beautiful or interesting for the artist."

Nature itself as machine: such is the force of the preeminently typical opening page of one of Lewis' first great narratives, the (then) scandalous *Cantleman's Spring Mate* of 1917:

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> Cantleman walked in the strenuous fields, steam rising from them as though from an exertion, dissecting the daisies specked in the small wood, the primroses on the banks, the marshy lakes, and all God's creatures. The heat of a heavy premature Summer was cooking the little narrow belt of earth-air, causing everything innocently to burst its skin, bask abjectly and profoundly. Everything was enchanted with itself and with everything else. The horses considered the mares immensely appetizing masses of quivering shiny flesh: was there not something of 'je ne sais quoi' about a mare, that no other beast's better-half possessed?

So also for the sexual stimulation of birds, of sows and hogs, indeed of man himself, the primordial sensual awakening of spring proving on closer inspection to be nothing but the effect of some terrific atmospheric pressure-cookery.

Yet this alarming demystification of the organic is conveyed in a paradoxical way: nothing is more characteristic of Lewis than the peculiar rotation of our inferential system around the adjective "strenuous," the peculiar slippage of the properties thus named from their official referent in the sentence. The fields, we tell ourselves, can in no case themselves really be thought of as strenuous: what is "strenuous" is at best the walk through them, or Cantleman's own exertions. Anthropomorphic projection seems an inadequate term for this shift, to which classical rhetoric gave the name "hypallage," and in which the attributes of actor or act are transferred onto the dead scenery. It is indeed a kind of contamination of the axis of contiguity, offering a glimpse of a world in which the old-fashioned substances, like marbles in a box, are rattled so furiously together that their "properties" come loose and stick to the wrong places—a very delirium of metonymy of which Lewis' subsequent writings provide some stunning examples.

Yet at this point something quite unexpected happens, and it is as though beneath this initial figural sense a new and far more literal meaning inserted itself. Cantleman was just a blind: now the fields really are "strenuous" after all in their own right, as overworked agents, throwing themselves enthusiastically into the business of giving off steam, perspiring from the effort of summer's thermal preparations. So what was on the story's literal level a figure (the fields as the place for Cantleman's strenuous walk) is now, on the figural level of what the fields in spring

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are like, taken all too literally; nor does the process stop there, for the metaphorical steam from Nature's kitchen then just as unexpectedly becomes the steamy sweating surface of the flanks of real mares. And so forth: a veritable self-generating image- and sentence-producing machine can be glimpsed here at work behind the dextrous and imperceptible substitution of literal and figurative levels for each other.

Looked at from a different angle, from that of the structure of these figures themselves, we have here evidently to do with what in Roman Jakobson's influential distinction would be described as the substitution of a metaphor for a metonymy; with a metonymic figure subsequently transformed as though by sleight of hand into the complicated metaphor of nature as a vast machine. Better still, since the spell of the initial metonymic gesture is never really fully overcome, we have to do with a metaphoric process *concealed* behind the external trappings of metonymic transfer, with a metaphor which can apparently come into being only *disguised* as metonymy, or, contrariwise, with an analytical, additive, mechanistic, essentially metonymic surface movement which is secretly powered by the natural energy of metaphoric creation.

What is achieved by this peculiar linguistic substitution is thus first and foremost a demystification of the process of creation itself, an implicit repudiation of that valorization of metaphor, from Aristotle to Proust, as the "hallmark of genius," and of the essentially organic ideology for which the very essence of the poetic process is the perception, or indeed the invention, of analogies. And no doubt the primacy of metaphor is a projection of a literary hierarchy in which poetry and poetic inspiration are felt to be somehow more lofty and more valuable than the humdrum referential production of prose: as Jakobson has shown, indeed, the basic mechanism of realistic prose is metonymy rather than metaphor:

> Following the path of contiguous relationships, the realistic author metonymically digresses from the plot to the atmosphere and from the characters to the setting in space and time. He is fond of synecdochic details. In the scene of Anna Karenina's suicide Tolstoy's artistic attention is focussed on the heroine's handbag; and in *War and Peace* the synecdoches "Hair on the upper lip" or "bare shoulders" are used by the same writer to stand for the female characters to whom these features belong.

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In Lewis, however, metonymy is a sign of the devaluation of inspiration itself, and of the art-sentence as a composed, subjectively ripe melodic unit in its own right. For the aesthetic of inspiration is essentially a transcendental one, presupposing a chosen few who are the vessels of the sacred frenzy, and claiming for artistic practice the status of some esoteric mystery which is closed to all but the initiated, the priesthood of "genius." The religious bias of such a concept of art is less noticeable in earlier, hierarchical societies in which art and the artist have a well-defined social function; but in our own levelled and post-feudal world, the defense of aesthetic privilege and of the sacred character of metaphor necessarily becomes an implicit political stance as well. Lewis' futurism is thus a profoundly anti-transcendental, democratic gesture: the machine as against the luxury furnishings of the great estates, the production of sentences as against the creation of beauty or the masterpiece. Lewis was of course himself an elitist in politics and an adherent of the genius or great-man theory of history: all I want to suggest at the present is that his artistic practice, on the level of its smallest intelligible units, the sentences and the images themselves, has a quite different inner logic about it, and one which contradicts the spirit of his ideology. Not that Lewis' work is poor in metaphor either, on the contrary! Yet, as we have shown, that figural richness, not given to everybody, is instinctively restructured into metonymic forms and surfaces which anyone could make up for himself, and nowhere is this clearer than in those idling passages where the voice of metaphor is silent and where metonymy functions on its own, motor wide-open, in a kind of additive sentence-production as accessible to the common man as carpentry or literacy itself.

Here we have, for example, the painstaking anatomy of the external world and of gesture; a kind of tireless visual inventory which reminds us of some of the more famous bravura or anti-bravura pieces in *Tristram Shandy,* and with which, given some initial object, page upon page might conveniently be filled:

> Don Alvaro could not have moved more slowly off the table had he been demonstrating the exercise to a slow-witted beginner in gymnastics: first he uncrossed his legs with a languorous slowness that suspended the leg he was thus translating for an appreciable accretion of seconds in mid-air; and he dropped it down beside the other with as much deliberation—as much inch by

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> inch—as if the floor which was to receive it had been a hot brick, or an uncomfortable icicle.

In a passage of this kind the strong but perfunctory metaphors merely serve to reinforce, to sketch in, the step-by-step dismantling of the body's gestural machine. What such a style implies is that reality is infinitely divisible, that it can be rendered in sentences of any length, the most momentous upheavals dismissed in a single phrase, the tiniest atomic units of experience subdivided still further, towards some unimaginable infinitesimality; or else, what amounts to the same thing, that you can express a given phenomenon over and over again in a host of different, yet ultimately identical formulations.

And like the body, the mind is a mechanism also, one which at its worst can be rendered in much the same additive fashion: "Pulley has been most terribly helpful and kind there's no use excusing himself Pulley has been most terribly helpful and kind—most terribly helpful and he's been kind. He's been most terribly kind and helpful, there are two things, he's been most kind he's been terribly helpful, he's kind he can't help being—he's terribly." This mindless babble is designed to represent what Lewis thought of as the gertrude "steining" of the modern child cult; yet it proceeds along the same fundamental aesthetic presuppositions as the external anatomies examined above and projects a notion of reality as something external and infinitely subdivisible, before which the writer places himself like a draughtsman, prepared to blacken "tireless" quantities of pages in the representation of any object set before him. *The Apes of God* (1932) is indeed a monument to this illimitable sentence-producing capacity which is itself but a figure of man's productive power in the industrial age.

This is not to imply that such production is always good or interesting in the old sense: on the contrary, immense arid stretches of Lewis' often hastily composed works are as much a deliberate insult to the reader's intelligence as they are a challenge to the older ritualistic cult of Beauty or of fine writing. Yet paradoxically this is itself the source of the immensely liberating energy of Lewis' style, for in it the principle of sheer sentence-production is somehow independent of all the individual sentences which it leaves strewn behind it, and of few writers can it be said in the same way that the verbal flaw, the bad or sloppy

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or mechanical writing, fails to damage the work itself. Joyce as a high priest had an obligation to invest every sentence with a kind of sacred character: for Lewis, on the contrary, it is the occasional lapse and verbal misfunction which stands as a sign and a confirmation of his mechanistic enterprise.

For Lewis himself, there was no doubt a strong scientific bias at work in the systematic analysis and disjunction over which the metonymic pole presides: "burying Euclid deep in the living flesh," his characterization of the central impulse of his painting, might also have served as a motto for the sentences themselves. Yet in the present day and age, which has come to understand scientific research as essentially a question of model-building, we are perhaps less intimidated by the prestige of science as absolute truth; more inclined, in the present context, to view the scientific component in Lewis' style as simply one vocabulary-field or terminological stock among a number of other, equally distinctive sub-languages: as for instance the deliberately flourished anglicisms and British colloquialisms such as "fuss" or "toddle," "beastly" and "strapping"; or again the explicitly "painterly" and technical characteristics of certain descriptive passages, as though carefully blocked off by the expert's thumb, extended to full distance. These word groups do not become assimilated to some larger unity of tone: on the contrary, their very function is to *interfere with each other,* to clash visibly within the sentence itself in such a way that no surface homogeneity can reform, that the words, unable to go together properly, project the warring planes and angles of a cubist painting. The sentence is thus an amalgam of heterogeneous forces which must not be allowed to congeal: hence the ultimate and ineducable unruliness of the Lewis style, half-baked by design, and structurally too scandalous for even the most accommodating Pantheon, as, emblematically, in his famous description of the Trolls: "hairy, surgical, and yet invisible." That the composition of such sentences is a visual process, a juxtaposition and collage of word-objects felt to possess visible and wellnigh tangible shapes, may be judged from the effects of Lewis' blindness; for unlike Joyce, the Lewis of the last years, able only to think or hear his language, reverts to an almost eighteenth-century sobriety, the fireworks of the earlier style passing over now into the content of the narratives.

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2

> I have described the nature of my own humour—how, as I said, it went over into everything, making a drama of mock-violence of every social relationship. Why should it be so *violent*—so mock-violent—you may at the time have been disposed to enquire? Everywhere it has seemed to be compelled to go into some frame that was always a simulacrum of mortal combat.
>
> —*The Wild Body*

This apparently indeterminable capacity of the sentence-producing mechanism, the seemingly random spreading measurements of the metonymic impulse, are however not permitted to operate unchecked: for it is clear that, proliferating according to their own internal logic, the sentence patterns we have described would result in nothing but vast sheets of surface decoration, vast additive descriptions of necessity static even when detailing the most violent external agitations, something like the excesses of early Beckett. The mode of Lewis' language is however narrative rather than lyrical, which means that its energies, diverted to the service of a succession of acts in time, are henceforth governed by the rigid inner structural limits of the story-line.

Thus on the sentences is conferred an orientation in time and the thrust of movement directed: yet paradoxically it is out of the initially static situation of the artist-writer before his model that this narrative dynamism awakens, and the dominant, controlling form of action in Lewis is generated out of that seemingly contemplative stance of the detached observer which characterizes the narrator of *The Wild Body* and the title figure of *Tarr,* not to speak of Wyndham Lewis the painter himself. For no one is better placed than the draughtsman to understand the exchange of forces set up between the observing point of view and the thing contemplated, between the object and the eye that takes inventory of it: not some disembodied union of knower and known, but rather two mechanisms squaring off against each other, each quasi-automatically readjusting itself to the automatic movements of the other, as in the scene in *The Childermass* in which the zombie-like longshoreman poles his boat over against the figure (Pullman) observing him from the bank: "A stone's-throw out he stops, faces the shore, studying sombrely in perspective the man-sparrow, who multiplies precise movements, an

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organism which in place of speech has evolved a peripatetic system of response to a dead environment. It has wandered beside this Styx, a lost automaton rather than a lost soul. . . ." Man-machine responding to environment, automata reacting to each other: the primal form, the archetypal organizational event, in Lewis is thus this reciprocal interaction of tics and twitches ordered into an obligatory circuit—this reflex of vasomotor action and reaction which may be described as a ceaseless perpetual exchange of sparks between any two existents felt as contrary or opposing poles.

The privileged dramatic form of such an exchange is thus evidently dialogue itself: hence the exemplary reaction of the Bailiff to the intervention of his primal adversary Hyperides: "electrified at the impact of the new voice . . . he lights up all over. The sounds stagger his senses like a salvo from a gong announcing battle from the positions of a legendary enemy. It is a hail from the contrary pole, it opens for him by magic the universe that lies between which before the voice came was shut and dead." This is the very element of Lewis' novelistic world, this combative, exasperated yet jaunty stance of monads in collision, a kind of buoyant truculence in which matched and abrasive consciousnesses slowly rub into life against each other. It is, indeed, as though for Lewis, who saw his privileged role as the essentially non-social one of artist or pure eye, the most desirable condition for human life remained that of solitude: thus the doomed lovers of the *Revenge for Love* wish for nothing better than to be left alone by their insistent contemporaries; while the ageing Lewis himself, longing for a world freed from parties and from the primacy of the political, just as in centuries gone by the secular mind yearned for release from the tyranny of the older religious absolutes, conceived some ultimate image of the peace of angelic and divine *indifference*. So one is tempted to think of the opening scene of *Tarr* as somehow symptomatic, as a kind of emblematic hesitation and reluctance against the unpropitious background of which all the later dramatic contacts in Lewis will take place:

> Hobson and Tarr met in the Boulevard du Paradis.—They met in a gingerly, shuffling fashion: they had so many good reasons for not slowing down when they met, numbers of antecedent meetings when it would have been better if they had kept on, all

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> pointing to *why* they *should* crush their hats over their eyes and hurry forward, so that it was a defeat and insanitary to have their bodies shuffling and gesticulating there.

Under such circumstances all human relations are bound to have something vaguely ominous about them, and the more heightened moments of scandal or violence prove to be nothing but the convulsive effort to free oneself from one's interlocutor, or—as with the fearful Kreisler—to obliterate him in an explosion of rage and black bile.

Lewis thus takes his place in one of the most distinctive sub-traditions of the modern novel, in which it is sheer interpersonality or intersubjectivity which comes to be seen as the essential and indeed the only genuine object of narrative representation. Such a sub-tradition, of course, emerges from the more general situation of all modern literature, and as such reflects the universal disappearance of that older naive or "natural," unselfconscious, "realistic" storytelling, for which a kind of common sense reality exists, and the very categories of experience and the event have not yet become problematical. With the eclipse of this older belief in reality, the novelist comes to know a new hesitancy before the raw materials of life, one which frees him for the most ruthless stylization: thus what, after Bakhtin, we may call the *dialogical* novel shares with the other sub-varieties of the modern a kind of abstracting and generalizing tendency, a kind of constructivistic and model-building freedom, weakening the hold of actuality itself and of the empirical situations of everyday life, which are no longer felt to be meaningful in all their concrete uniqueness, as events with settings and dates, as situations embedded in the very limits, inescapable, of history itself. Now on the contrary these concrete material determinations in which the human fact finds itself imprisoned have become so alienated and dehumanized as to feel utterly contingent, so that the writer's stylization—whatever form it may take—stands as an attempt to free private life from the nightmare of public and external history. Such new forms are thus realistic and utopian all at once: for they clearly reflect the increasing subjectivization of individual existence, the fear and revulsion of intellectuals before the new and ever more systematized external class conditions of industrial society, the atomization and disintegration of the older and more traditional collective groups and social modes; at the

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same time that they incarnate a will to overcome the commodity reification of late nineteenth-century capitalism, to substitute for the mouldering and overstuffed bazaar of late Victorian life the mystique and the promise of some more intense and heightened, more genuine existence.

To take inventory of the various symbolic reactions to this historical situation would amount to an anatomy of modernism in general, in its most varied and contradictory forms, in which all the extremes of stylization are present, from the attempt to eliminate consciousness and logic, as hostages of a degraded culture or reality-principle, to efforts to extirpate matter as such and to fix in language some concentrated and liberated principle of pure spirit. No doubt the most influential form of such stylization, as far as the novel is concerned, is that represented, as by its insignia, by the "discovery" of the *monologue intérieur,* and characterized by the exploration, from the inside, of the individual consciousness and preconscious, of the very inner reality of the monad itself. It is from such an essentially subjectivistic and indeed often solipsistic type of form that we must learn to distinguish the interactional or dialogical model of life which Lewis' novels practice. The ill-assorted representatives of such a new sub-variety would doubtless number such works as those of Lewis' contemporary D. H. Lawrence; as those passionate intermonadic dialogues in which Russian novelists from Dostoyevsky to Olesha struggle to overcome that characteristic inner sense of grotesqueness, that endemic ego-deficiency or identity failure which, virtually a Russian literary tradition, resulted from the backwardness of the Russian bourgeoisie; as those French novels of our own time which, under the galvanic shock of Sartre's description of the Look and of our alienation by the Other, have sought to project their new vision of this dimension of life in the varying modes of Simone de Beauvoir's *L'Invitée,* of the elliptical and ritualistic communions of Marguerite Duras, of Nathalie Sarraute with her feeling for human relations as the virtually instinctual stirrings of organic tropisms.

It is indeed Nathalie Sarraute who with her concept of the "sub-conversation" has perhaps best defined, long after the fact, the structure of the kind of novel we are here considering: for the term designates and presupposes a situation in which the apparent, surface conversation is no longer the real one; in which

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beneath the routine and insignificant spoken exchange there comes into view some more fundamental human drama, some deeper wordless groping struggle or interaction. It is as though the old ordinary language of everyday life had ceased to be an adequate vehicle for individual expression or communication: brittle with cliché, great surfaces of it corroded by publicity and received ideas, that commercialized and conventionalized language begins to break apart, leaving deserts of silence visible between the cracks. Here genuine human life continues to exist, but as it were underground, beneath the dead surface of social routine and convention, and the task of the novelist becomes that of recuperating that deeper reality and of inventing a new language in which its preverbal or nonverbal events and incidents can be somehow adequately rendered.

The narrative of the interpersonal novel will therefore be a split-level one in its very structure, for it presupposes the continuing existence of that banal surface reality which it aims to undermine. By the same token, it is characterized by a relentless expansion and distortion of that everyday situation itself, a dilation of daily life into the transparent immobility of the eternal afternoons, the eternal teas and Sunday morning strolls of Proustian narrative, its deceleration into that strange slow-motion sleepwalking tempo in which the audible reply hangs and holds fire and echoes for long pages during which the realer, swarming, tacit interactions take place, those of the "pregnant" or "meaningful" silences of a Henry James, of the breathless stillness of Faulknerian evocation, or again, of that charged and menacing silence of Wyndham Lewis' characters, a silence of repressed violence "of such a quality that if it continued but a very little longer, spontaneous combustion must occur in response to it."

The differences between these various practitioners of the dialogical novel can of course be expected to emerge from the way in which each conceives of the nature of that underlying, preverbal reality, that more fundamental but sublinguistic sign system, as well as in the mode in which each attempts to bring it to new speech. At one extreme the novelist can simply *explain* the deeper significance of the insignificant words and gestures of his characters, taking their banal and realistic, desultory conversations apart, as it were from above, painstakingly, with tweezers, and carefully expounding the new pattern of clues

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concealed in an indifferent reality. The originality of Henry James, indeed, was to have projected this analytical activity back into his characters themselves, who thus become virtual specialists trained in an adept and hyperconscious conversational linguistics, possessing their own specialized terminology and their own analytical methods, their reflections constituting a virtual *metalanguage* with respect to the conversational material upon which they work ("the 'everything' clearly struck him, to the point even of determining his reply," "there were moreover the other facts of the selection and decision that this demonstration of her own had required," etc.).

At the other extreme, we find a novelist like Nathalie Sarraute herself attempting to characterize the quality of such interaction globally, and as it were from the outside, in the form of an image or *metaphor,* most frequently that obsessive organic imagery which inspires the narrator of *Martereau* to feel that other people "irresistibly secrete on contact with me a substance like the liquid which certain species give off to blind their prey."

For the most part, however, the reduplicated vertical structure of such a narrative is articulated by the simple substitution of a new and vigorous language for the old, outworn one which the characters speak but which no longer expresses anything: for if it is so that with the decay of speech, hitherto inanimate and speechless objects and realities begin to speak with a language of their own, then the novelist has only to give them voice, to lend them his own voice as it were by proxy for the silence to be filled at once by an intelligible babel of messages of all kinds. Thus Bertha's room itself emits its own characteristic note, "cheap and dead, but rich with the same lifelessness as the trees without" (*Tarr*): while later on "the abject little room seemed to be thrust forward to awaken his memories and ask for pity. An intense atmosphere of teutonic suicide permeated everything; he could not move an eyelid or a muscle without wounding or slighting something: it was like being in a dark kitchen at night, where you know at every step you will put your foot upon a beetle . . ." Such an entity as this room is clearly a living being, a character, an agent of the heroine herself, something on the order of the more ignoble Racinian *confidentes.*

Other such objects, indeed, (and there can be no doubt that

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in some deep Bachelardian fashion Lewis was fascinated his whole life long by rooms and houses, by dwellings of all kinds) live the momentary life of a minor character, or bit parts of auxiliary "cameo" appearances, as in the following biographical sketch in which, as in trick cinematography, a whole organic life-process is visible, speeded up before our eyes:

> The Restaurant Vallet, like many of its neighbours, had been originally a clean tranquil little creamery, consisting of a small shop a few feet either way. Then one after another its customers had lost their reserve: they had asked, in addition to their daily glass of milk, for côtes de pré salé and similar massive nourishment, which the decent little business at first supplied with timid protest. But perpetual scenes of unbridled voracity, semesters of compliance with the most brutal appetities of man, gradually brought about a change in its character; it became frankly a place where the most full-blooded palate might be satisfied. As trade grew the small business had burrowed backwards into the ramshackle house: bursting through walls and partitions, flinging down doors, it discovered many dingy rooms in the interior that it hurriedly packed with serried cohorts of eaters. It had driven out terrified families, had hemmed the apoplectic concierge in her 'loge,' it had broken out on to the court at the back in shed-like structures: and in the musty bowels of the house it had established a broiling luridly lighted roaring den, inhabited by a fierce band of slatternly savages.

At the same time, if inanimate objects develop character and begin to function as actors in the drama, the animate themselves, the "real people" equally well tend to fragment into a host of smaller units, and the gestural organs of the body, perhaps because they are more closely associated with the older common sense view of human reality and because they are customarily supposed to "express" thoughts and feelings, become if anything less articulate than the surrounding landscape:

> The over flesh-coloured face (as if violently pretending to be flesh and blood at all costs) with the preposterous false bottom to it gazed at the portrait. It gazed and gazed with a cowlike, cud-chewing concentration. All the irritability of the last fortnight or more of suspense smouldered in the capacious false bottom of this fauxbonhomme's headpiece—with its leaden secretions it weighed down this impossibly innocent chin. For it could be a receptacle on occasion for dissatisfaction, as well as for bluff "kindliness." The complete gamut of hatred felt by its owner for this disaffected craftsman expressed itself in the expression-

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> less eyes, as their vacuity deepened from blankness to abysses of utter blankness, from a bland blankness to a brutish blankness, from Pickwick or Pecksniff to the orang-outang: till nature's dark abhorrence of a vacuum—of such a vacuum!—became so intolerable as to be really malignant.

In this world of fragmented and then restructured and recharged objects and forces we are now plunged up to the eyes: now reality is so close up against us as to be blurred and unrecognizable: "'Oh dis-m'aimes-tu? Dis que tu m'aimes!' A blurting, hurrying personality rushed right up into his face. He was very familiar with it. It was like the sightless clammy charging of a bat. Humbug had tempestuously departed: their hot-house was suffering a blast of outside air. He stared at her face groping up as though it scented mammals in his face: it pushed to right, then to left, and rocked itself." Such stifling involvement in reality, and particularly in a reality thus defamiliarized, amounts to a kind of ascesis, for both writer and reader: it offers a descent into a situation without any perspectives, any breathing space, without the mental relief of the overview or of relativizing judgement. This event, this text, is now for the moment *everything,* and we must live our entire life, for the time, within its narrow confines.

At the same time we have here to do with a profound transformation in the substances with which narrative works, with the basic tokens of storytelling, the characters and settings, the actors, the very fundamental categories and building blocks from which plot is constructed. The older novel with its recognizable "characters" was still under the domination of what the Structuralists would call the humanistic paradigm: still dependent, in other words, on a received notion of a preexisting human nature and on an illusion of the autonomy of individual life and individual consciousness. It is precisely the disintegration of such categories which D. H. Lawrence evokes in a famous letter in which he reflects on the deeper mission of Futurism:

> What is interesting in the laugh of the woman is the same as the binding of the molecules of steel or their action in heat; it is the inhuman will, call it physiology, or like Marinetti —physiology of matter, that fascinates me. I don't so much care about what the woman *feels*—in the ordinary usage of the word. That presumes an *ego* to feel with. . . . You mustn't look in my novel for the old

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> stable *ego*—of the character. There is another *ego,* according to whose action the individual is unrecognisable, and passes through, as it were, allotropic states which it needs a deeper sense than any we've been used to exercise, to discover are states of the same radically unchanged element. (Like as diamond and coal are the same pure single element of carbon. The ordinary novel would trace the history of the diamond—but I say, "Diamond, what! This is carbon." And my diamond might be coal or soot, and my theme is carbon.)

So Lawrence proposes a total overhaul of the very raw materials of narrative construction: and in this he is very close indeed to Lewis himself, with the latter's idiosyncratic notion of art as *satire,* which he understood to be a non-ethical, purely external mode of representation, cubist-caricatural, its objective and materialistic techniques fundamentally set against all the shapeless warm organic flux of inner monologue and psychology-oriented subjectivism. For both writers, therefore, the attack on the older subjective literary categories amounts to what the Russian and Czech Formalists would have described as an attempt to shatter the numb habituation of routine daily life, with its common sense assurances of individual reality, and to replace it with some other, more forbidding, less human and familiar one which, by sapping the mystifications of private and personal consciousness, allows a glimpse of the larger suprapersonal forces at work in what we call human life.

Paradoxically, however, this profound internal modification of the raw materials of plot does not so much subvert the latter as rather ultimately cause it to be reinvented afresh, as it were *ab ovo,* in a return to the most primitive anecdotal techniques and forms of storytelling from out of which the later, highly sophisticated structures of the nineteenth-century novel ultimately developed. For half a century of stylized abstraction in all the media, Freud's revelation of the inner logic of dreams, the narrative models of Propp and Greimas, have all in their various ways shown us that narrative is a pure temporal form the content of which is relatively indifferent: it is not the substance and intrinsic interest of the actors which make up the story, but rather, quite the opposite, the narrative structure which creates the actors themselves. For the dreaming mind, indeed, an intelligible "plot" can be instinctively fashioned out of the most heterogeneous odds and ends, the contents of a bathroom cupboard, say, which little

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by little, in their interaction, come to be invested with something of the meaning and "personality" of pieces on a chess-board. So, for Tarr, Bertha's room, the bust of Beethoven, but also his own thoughts, some of them stale and obsessive, others with the unrecognizable insolence of some insistent advertisement, words that float across consciousness with a mysterious life of their own like unfamiliar but evidently powerful new characters, half-looks that draw unpleasant attention to themselves, drumming fingers which repeat some urgent yet incomprehensible message, faces like ominous buildings in which a whole host of enemies lies in dangerous ambush.

Yet this implicit reinvention of storytelling in modern literature lacks all the stark monumentality, all the grim gestural simplicity, of the emergent anecdotal forms of the time of Dante and Giotto, of Boccaccio: for it is no longer with the freshness of origins in a void and in an untouched language that literature itself can here be reinvented. Rather, the renewal must be effectuated within the confines of dead storytelling conventions which remain massively in place, in a world already overinfected with culture and with dead forms and a stifling weight of dead ideas. In this new situation, therefore, the novelist is not so much a creative, as rather a performing, artist: his "book" or "scenario" is handed him from the outset, in the form of the banal situations of a degraded everyday life, gossipy women, impecunious Bohemia, a dreary love-spat: his "composition" of these scenes is in reality an *interpretation* of them, and he gives them new life in much the same way that an actor's voice restores vitality to an exhausted text. So at this late hour in Western culture the novelist must intervene in his very situations themselves, speaking on behalf of the gestures of his characters, which are henceforth too commonplace to discharge any intrinsic meaning of their own. For the mediocre lovers' quarrel, for Tarr's clumsy gesture of affection which solves nothing, must be substituted some new and as it were alternative story-line, a bustling and lively second-degree narrative which comes into being behind the initial, inert and static one:

> Docilely she covered him with her inertia. He was supposed to be performing a miracle of bringing the dead to life. Gone about too crudely, the willing mountebank, Death, had been offended: it is not thus that great spirits are prevailed upon to flee. Her "indif-

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> ference"—the great, simulated and traditional—would not be ousted by an upstart and younger relative. By Tarr himself, grown repentant, yes. But not by another "indifference."

Such a passage is something more than mere extended metaphor: it amounts to the virtual replacement of the older "real" event by a complete new narrative in miniature, one in which the older psychological "attributes" of the "characters"—indifference, reluctance, a pang of wounded pride—are transformed into actors and characters in their own right, with their own allegorical story to tell.

At the same time, however, this actantial enrichment only serves to link the two actors ever more closely together in their common enterprise: the latter has lost its conventional unity and name ("a lovers' quarrel") while becoming the concrete embodiment of interaction in general. Social life thus becomes a contest of every instant, in which one can make the right or the wrong move: Bertha planning the proper explanation for her public embrace by Kreisler decides that "as long a time as possible must be allowed to elapse before she referred to it directly. It must almost seem as though she were going to say nothing; impressive silence—nothing. Their minds, accustomed to her silence, would, when it came, find the explanation all the more impressive." So, in such a struggle, all of one's gestures, even one's silences, are mobilized and take on the value of signs, organized by larger strategic concepts. Unfortunately, however, one can also be trumped or outflanked by one's principal opponent: thus Fräulein Liepman, in a shrewd and instinctive countermove, dismisses Kreisler as unworthy of any further comment whatsoever.

> Bertha's story had come uncomfortably and difficultly to flower. No one seemed to want to hear it. She wished she had not waited so long. But, the matter put in the light given it by Fräulein Liepman, she must not delay: she was, there was no question about it, in some sense responsible for Kreisler. It was her duty to *explain* him: but now Fräulein Liepman had put an embargo on explanations: there were to be no more explanations. The subject was drawing perilously near the point where it would be dropped. . . .

In such a universe, official scandal is merely the explosion into actuality of what is everywhere latent, or, if you prefer, the un-

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expected coincidence of the two levels, the eruption of the materials of the sub-conversation as though for the first time into the explicit language and overt acts of the conventional dialogue itself.

In the long run, however, the dialogical model comes to displace the dramatic "scene" as a narrative form, and to tie the raw materials of the situation together in a new and closer kind of systematization. So Kreisler's relationship to his friend Ernst Vokt has all the biological intimacy of borrower to borrowee: "He was now in a position analogous to that of a man who had been separated for some months from his wife: he was in a luxurious hurry once more to see the colour of Vokt's gold." Now all of the dealings between the two are drawn together in a single overall dramatic image of which the various episodes are but ongoing developments. For something has changed: "it was only gradually that he realized of how much more value Vokt's money now was, and what before was an unorganized mass of specie, in which the professional borrower could wallow, was now a sound and suitably conducted business." So what in more traditional works were simply figures and metaphorical characterizations of a concrete situation here take on the value of form in their own right, become new events of which the older "real" episodes are but the support and secondary enrichment: "it was [Soltyk] who had superseded Kreisler in the position of influence as regards Vokt's purse. But Soltyk did not borrow a hundred marks: his system was far more up to date. Ernst had experienced an unpleasant shock in coming into contact with Kreisler's clumsy and slovenly money habits again." Thus organized, such an "event" is prepared and preformed to bear new kinds of meanings, both instinctual and political-national, particularly in such a passage as the one we have just quoted, where Kreisler's "method" collides with Soltyk's in tones reminiscent of the shock between lower and higher cultures.

In so many ways, the novelist "edits" his footage and like a movie-maker transforms the givens of his initial story into a finished montage, as into purely cinematographic events which live a temporal life of their own on their own terms. In so doing, he would appear to have reversed the priorities of Coleridge's distinction between fancy and imagination: for what is operative today is the essentially decorative work of fancy itself as it trans-

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forms the bare structure of the facts, of the basic situation or *scenario,* with its bare dialogue and sparse scenic and gestural indications, into a complicated series of sub-events, swarming with microscopic agitation. As for imagination, the primal shaping power of the mind, the very source of plot-formation in its most august Aristotelian sense, it has lived: and its dead monuments are what oppress creative spontaneity, its forms appropriated and trivialized by the commodity culture. If to anyone, it is perhaps more to the reader than to the writer himself that something of the older function of imagination still falls: for after the essentially analytic and nominalistic work of the novelist in fragmenting his initial situation into the more vivid incidents of his sub-conversations, it is the reader who is called upon to reinvent that external form itself, once more to plot the vast, slow curve of the dialogue, and to restore to the newly minted present of the novelist's language that absent whole of which its moments are the parts.

3

Such is what might be called the vertical composition of the type of narrative under examination here, its multilevel complexity permitted to develop to the full by the stable and essentially simple framework of the dialogue-struggle or *agon* between two characters within which, in such works as *Tarr* (1918) or *The Revenge for Love* (1937), it takes place. Yet the horizontal dimension of Lewis' works, that which marks them off as interactional or dialogical narratives in the sense indicated above, is perhaps most clearly visible to the naked eye there where it is most abstract, and in that work of Lewis which would least seem to merit the qualification.

In *The Childermass* (1928), indeed, the very preconditions for the sub-event or the sub-conversation would seem to be abolished: for there is no longer any surface reality lined with some fundamental one, the very existence of reality itself is called in question, according to the generic rules of theological science fiction all the inner resistance of matter is annulled by definition, so that we find ourselves before the most delirious and bewildering succession of transformations, not merely of individual components, but of the entire world-structure as a whole. With this immense overcrowding of the shores of the dead by the fear-

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ful "slaughter of the innocents" of World War I, the reader has indeed come as close as language can bring him to a pure and uncontrolled experience of sheer sense perception, to that virtual obliteration of the external common sense world by the nominalistic chaos of sensation which seethed beneath the surface of the split-narrative described above. The adventures of its heroes Pullman and Satterthwaite among the treacherous and shifting "time-flats" mark a kind of outside limit of hallucinatory narration, one no longer representational, no longer viewed through the "fourth wall" of some stable observer, but where indeed the observer himself (and with him the reader) is sucked into the ceaseless whirling flux of perpetual change, shedding his identity along with that of his object. *The Childermass* thus constitutes a supreme object for linguistic analysis, whatever its excesses as a novel, and stands as a kind of monument to the outer limits of certain expressive capacities of language itself.

It is precisely under such conditions that we are able to articulate the vast formal and structural differences between the essentially narrative mode of Lewis' fantasmagoria, and the lyrical one of the shapeless, daydreaming, solipsistic "poetic prose" of many of his contemporaries: in *The Childermass* the actual words themselves are a secondary reflex of the events unfolding according to their determinate structure, while the language of the latter (we may think, for example, of Lewis' *bête noire* Virginia Woolf), in its haste to isolate the pure impression from the things themselves, ends up as hollow and as insubstantial as the aimless reveries which are its object. The world of the monad, in short, lacks that inner resistance without which narrative sentences cannot come into being; and the equally rich subjective material of dialogical narrative is distinguished from that of such impressionism above all by the presence of another consciousness, another pole, an Other:

> these inner dramas composed of attacks, triumphs, recoils, defeats, caresses, bites, rapes, murders, generous renunciations or humble submissions, all have one thing in common: they cannot do without a partner . . . he is preeminently the catalyzer, the stimulant, thanks to whom these movements are set in motion, the obstacle that gives them cohesion, that keeps them from growing soft from ease and gratuitousness, or from going round and round in circles in the monotonous indigence of ruminating on one thing. He is the threat, the real danger as well as the prey

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> that brings out their alertness and their suppleness, the mysterious element whose unforeseeable reactions, by making them continually start up again and evolve toward an unknown goal, accentuate their dramatic nature (Nathalie Sarraute, *The Age of Suspicion*).

When we turn now to *The Childermass,* it becomes clear that this inner principle of stability and of resistance and density as well, which in the realistic novels took the form of dramatic struggle, is here hypostasized in the very existence of the couple itself. The team of Pullman and his old school chum, the imbecilic Satters, thus takes its place among the great tandems of literary history, from Don Quixote and Sancho, to Bouvard and Pécuchet and Vladimir and Estragon, fulfilling much the same function. For the isolated, monadic consciousness, indeed, there can be no way of distinguishing some inner hallucinatory fantasy from the objective metamorphoses of this precarious and unstable afterworld; nor can there remain any means of maintaining the unity of the personality in time through its ceaseless transmigrations. Whereas in Lewis' scheme, whatever Pulley or Satters turn into, their relationship to each other remains the same and permits continuing identification. Thus Satters becomes a baby, an old man, a navvy, a cockney soldier, a vamp and a public school boy in rapid succession: yet Pullman, changing age and temperament to follow suit, continues to perceive him as "the same." No doubt some of these metamorphoses may be thought of as simple figures of speech, intended to dramatize mere passing attitudes and characteristics: thus Pullman's protective and bossy behavior towards his wayward charge earns him the persona of Nurse Pullman, "distant and strong-minded, not-sniffing, not-offended, a tart smart tight little governess." Yet where the world of the "time-flats" meets the deepest impulses of Lewis' expressionism, the very distinction between the literal and the figurative is abolished, since reality as such is suspended and what was hitherto metaphoric now takes place "for real."

In another sense, it can be said that the personalities of Pullman and Satters are somehow less real than what happens to them: they are themselves functions of their situation, mechanically adapting to its fate. Thus character in the older sense (what the most fundamental identity of Pullman must be, the literal referent of the metaphoric characterization) proves to be

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itself subordinate to the interpersonal relationship of which it is but a pole: the old, hitherto introspectively explored subjective qualities of the autonomous monad now take second place to the structural network in which it finds definition and on whose disposition its own is closely dependent. "The time- and class-scales in which they hang in reciprocal action are oscillating violently, as they rush up and down through neighbouring dimensions they sight each other only imperfectly."

Such is the ultimate source of what is perhaps the most characteristic feature of Lewis' storytelling on the stylistic level: that shaping power of apposition or epithet which comes to the surface as an omnipresent device in *The Childermass*. "Ka Pullman," "Bill-Sikes-Satters," "big burning Gretchen," "the Styx-side sheikh"—such qualifications announce transformations in course and foretell the "metaphorical" content of the events about to be witnessed, the dramatic code, in short, in which the situation will now momentarily be staged, the costumes appropriate to this particular episode. The very syntactical rhythm of apposition itself, dangling before the fact, and drawn up taut by the sentence that reels it in, signals the changing of slides on the machine, emits the click with which a new image, full-blown, emerges onto the screen of perception: "A hieratic huge-headed bat, with raised arms the Bailiff protests in a thick patter of expostulation." The wing-like draperies hanging from the waving arms, the head poised as though in flight, the whole ominous image is flattened like a silhouette against the backdrop of space; it has nothing of the piecemeal life in time of normal perception, in which random scraps and fragments are gradually unified into manageable perspectives. It is indeed the very opposite of that impressionistic procedure which Proust characterized as a fidelity to perceptual experience itself, a presentation "of things in the order of our perceptions, rather than by first accounting for them by their causes." Here, on the contrary, the Gestalt comes first: it is the nameable phenomenon in its totality which then governs the subsequent emergence of its different parts and components. And as on the level of the image, so also on the larger scene of dramatic interaction: it is the overall characterization which dictates the very terms of the event's unfolding as well as the latest transformations of the characters involved: "The ox is felled: Satters as Keystone giant receives the crack

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exactly in the right spot, he sags forward in obedient overthrow, true to type —as though after a hundred rehearsals, true to a second—and crashes to earth as expected, rolling up a glazed eyeball galore, the correct classical Keystone corpse of Jack-the-Giantkiller comedy." The very use of preexisting conventionalized roles (Keystone comedy, Jack the Giantkiller) is inscribed in the sentences themselves as a slavish and comic "obedience" of reality to its archetypes: so the atomic elements of perception race to fill their appropriate stations in the Gestalt.

Such striking and almost hypertrophied overdevelopment of the appositional or epithet-forming function of language is further assisted, and at the same time depersonalized, it seems to me, by the curious indifference of this style for the events which take place within it: "A veteran rat trotting in an aerial gutter, [Pullman] catches a glimpse of glittering chasms but averts his eyes." The unpleasant overtones of the new avatar remain somehow unrecorded by the medium, which seems to transcend both pejorative and sympathetic at once. It is as though the whole mechanism of empathy or indeed of ethical judgement were switched off at the source, and this is so even in those works where Lewis is most deeply and autobiographically engaged: thus "Cantleman shook noisily in the wicker chair like a dog or a fly-blown old gentleman." This is *not* Lewis judging himself from the outside; rather an almost pathological depersonalization releases the personality itself from all favoritism, and prepares it to undergo a ceaseless mutability in its narrative qualifications.

The apposition is thus not unlike the actor's stage directions, which govern the new scenery, makeup, and physical attitudinizing in which the characters will anew reappear; and Lewis' practice in *The Childermass* inevitably recalls that paradoxical structure of the reading play of which we have spoken elsewhere and of which the Nighttown scene in *Ulysses* is a particularly striking example. Yet the metamorphoses in *Ulysses* seem to me to be the end-results of quite a different process than that at work in Lewis: they ratify the completion of pastiche, the climax of an essentially stylistic evocation ("And they beheld Him even Him, ben Bloom Elijah, amid clouds of angels ascend to the glory of the brightness at an angle of forty-five degrees over Donohoe's in Little Green Street like a shot off a shovel"), or else they represent unexpected dramatizations of private thoughts of Bloom

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throughout the day, implicit commentaries on the consequences of his fantasies as they intersect the coordinates of external reality and the social conditions of Dublin:

> Under an arch of triumph Bloom appears bareheaded, in a crimson velvet mantle trimmed with ermine, bearing Saint Edward's staff. . . . Bloom with asses' ears seats himself in the pillory with crossed arms, his feet protruding. . . . A charming soubrette with dauby cheeks, mustard hair and large male hands and nose, leering mouth. . . . Pigeonbreasted, bottleshouldered, padded, in nondescript juvenile grey and black striped suit, too small for him, white tennis shoes, bordered stockings with turnover tops, and a red school cap with badge. . . .

The raw material of these transformations is thus not unlike that used by Lewis, but it is here mediated through Bloom's subjectivity and is read in correlation with Bloom's inner reveries earlier in the day or with events in his past life, the whole unified by the stylistic *tone* in which all contradictions are ironically resolved as well as by the overall unity of Mr. Bloom's personality.

Whereas in Lewis it is not the unification but rather the dispersal of subjectivity which is aimed at; and as we have already seen, homogeneity of tone is neither desired nor achieved. If Joyce composes by tone (such might be essentially the definition of *pastiche*), Lewis composes by phrase, by larger word-units drawn from various sources which are never completely subdued and mastered by the overall form of the sentence itself. And as with these various ready-made and free-floating bits of speech, so also the content of the various transformations themselves derives, not from some previously prepared symbolism developed in the course of the work, but rather from a more general and external supraindividual cultural storehouse.

> Tying their chokers, trotting clowns hurrying at the crack of the magisterial circus-whip, the six scuttle and trip, but never fall, the ground rising in pustules at their feet to mock them, the wind clipping them on the ear, or pushing them upon the obstructions arranged for them to amuse the idiot-universe. They skip and dance on the bulky treacherous surface of the earth, stoic beneath nature's elemental hot-fisted cuffs, tumblers or Shakespearean clowns, punchballs got up as Pierrot.

The shifting appositions (circus clowns, Shakespearean clowns, Pierrot) program the events of the sentences in progress, and, as

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received images, are reflected in the outer form of the language itself by the constant play with received idioms (i.e., "hot-fisted cuffs" as a portmanteau of the expression "hot tempered" and the word "fisticuffs," the whole refashioned on the model of "tight-fisted").

The great sentences of Lewis therefore have little enough in common with that Flaubertian esthetic of the *mot juste* of which Joyce with his strategically placed adverbs and his Paterian unction represents the most characteristic modern realization: the conviction that sense perception can ultimately be fully rendered in sentences, that a *parole pleine* is possible, that the world really does exist to end up in a Book which will replace it and in which the glint of sunlight on a pond, the stir of wind upon the earth's surface, will thus forever gleam and mildly tremble in the eternal immobility of the printed page.

At the same time, there can be no doubt that Lewis fulfills another and very different tendency at work in the style of Flaubert, that namely of the *sottisier* and the dictionary of "received ideas." For insofar as Lewis' raw material is drawn directly from the warehouse of cultural cliché, the junk materials of a mass industrial society with its degraded art products and mechanical associations and mental representations, its force depends on the degree to which these commonplaces are already known to us: "Satters fully dressed is propped within, his lush bulk pitched against the jamb, occupying the breach in beefy sinuosity, his curled head bent somewhat to clear the lintel, his eyes cast archly up. The smile of Leonardo's St. John, appropriated to the features of a germanic ploughboy, sustains an expression of heavy mischief." I am tempted to say that where in Joyce such cultural and advertising archetypes are somehow reinvented, or at least suffused with Mr. Bloom's own subjectivity, adopted by him to the point where they are transformed into a kind of genuine inner and private symbolism, in Lewis they preserve their own autonomy, and the prestige of the no longer adequately visualizable masterpiece of Leonardo, diffused through Sunday rotogravures and banalized by art appreciation, shoots forth a distant and degraded ray to strike this passage with a spurious glow as the sign that this new face of Satters has been certified as visualizable by experts in some absent precinct of an official culture.

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The collage-composition practiced by Lewis is thus a reflection of the increasing and inescapable influence of mass culture in modern times, of what the Structuralists would call the Symbolic Order: that systematized network of cultural code and representation which preexists the individual and which speaks and invents him just as surely as language itself. In such a situation, indeed, there no longer exists anything like a personal or individualized speech, like a private thought: we merely practice conventionalized formulae whose form dictates its own content. Nor do we know any genuine experience any longer, for the degraded culture intervenes between us and our objects as well, substituting for them, with imperceptible sleight-of-hand, some standardized snapshot. Yet those who in such a situation continue to believe in a natural language, in the possibility of some genuinely expressive and immediate speech, fall most surely victim to the whole illusionistic structure reared around them and of whose existence they prefer to remain unaware.

Lewis' method is on the contrary to use the cliché against itself; or rather to pit clichés on the level of gestural images against the verbal clichés with which the actual sentences themselves are corroded. So a kind of perceptual freshness is reinvented in the following account of Pullman's movements as he offers to help Satters to his feet: "Stalking and stretching tense-legged, in a succession of classical art-poses suggestive of shadow-archery, he approaches Satters. He relaxes like the collapse of a little house of cards, extends a friendly lackadaisical hand, and sings out: 'Up again, come jump to it!' " The visual cliché is here broken into its component parts and verbalized in segments of verbal commonplace, so that the latter are not able to discharge their automatic meaning-effect, but, neutralized against each other's resistance, remain as imperatives to visualize the central gesture. Yet we must already know what that gesture is, otherwise the words cannot convey it to us: "Pullman several times is parted from one of his slippers, having to stop to reinsert his foot and prise it up with humped toes." The knowledge of the musuclar operation thus lends the sentence the force of a recall. "He sat upon a cushion, leoninely slumped back against the panelling, as if luxuriating in a technical knockout." The sentence thus hangs midway between two received images, that of sprawling against

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a sofa, and that other newsreel image of the boxer leaning seated against the ropes: oddly enough the metaphor does not serve to intensify the literal term, but rather to bear it off along with it into conventionality, at the same time leaving us with some unspecified sense of the intensity of their twin object or referent, the "real" and absolutely unique Victor sprawling against that unique sofa in an unrepeatable moment of time.

So it is that over the great moments in Lewis there hangs a strange and nagging sense of *déjà-vu*. The very appearance of the Bailiff, for instance, strikes you as being somehow as vivid as a cartoon character, or a creature out of fairy tales, as archetypal as all great character-creation, yet as familiar as the household bogeyman:

> Tapping on the flags of the court with a heavy stick, his neck works in and out as though from a socket, with the darting reptilian rhythm of a chicken. His profile is balanced, as he advances, behind and before by a hump and paunch. He wears a long and sombre caftan. His wide sandalled feet splay outwards as he walks at the angle and in the manner of a frog. No neck is visible, the chin appearing to issue from and return into the swelling gallinaceous chest. . . . He is all grinning vulpine teeth, puckered eyes, formidable declination of the ant-eating nose, rubicond cheeks, eyes of phosphor. The goatee waggles on the glazed bulbous chin; it is the diabolics of the most ancient mask in the world exulting in its appropriate setting.

We almost seem to *remember* such a figure, and are astonished that he needed to wait as long as for Lewis to be invented for the first time. Yet Falstaff and Quasimodo are products of genuine mythopoetic creation: their silhouettes dramatize the originality and the unity of their inner concepts; whereas Lewis' Bailiff is intense because he is put together out of the most vivid bits and pieces which lend him their own borrowed intensity: the chicken-walk, the hump, the caftan, the devil's mask, all are pieced together in a collage, and Lewis' evocation of the Bailiff is thus as dishonest and as artificial as the Bailiff himself.

Yet if Lewis' style thereby seems to renounce what the novelist has customarily been supposed to achieve—some sense of the wellnigh physiological uniqueness of landscape and feature, of event, a visionary conviction as to the unforeseeable presence of his scenes in time—his sentence creation proves to have affinities

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with a different type of narrative construction altogether. "Milton in the language of Swift": the force of Hugh Kenner's characterization of *The Human Age* springs no doubt from the unexpected reversal, in which the former is implicitly distinguished, not for his rhetorical and metrical construction, but rather as a maker of plots and a storyteller; and there can be no doubt that we return to *Paradise Lost* with new eyes when, after having read *The Human Age,* we see the older epic as a precursor of science fiction. Yet there are other, deeper affinities as well.

For artificial epic, from Vergil to that last and ripest of the Romantic narratives, the *Pan Tadeusz* of Mickiewicz, is an eclectic structure which combines elements of both poetic and narrative modes. Unlike genuine epic, with its formulaic basis, artificial epic emerges into a world in which prose narrative already exists and to which it therefore stands as a formal alternative: unlike prose narrative, however, it takes as its object of representation not the events and actions themselves but rather the describing of them, the process whereby such raw materials are seized and immobilized in the heightened and embellished speech of verse. There is thus already present in such a genre a basic and constitutive rift between form and content, between the words and their objects—a rift which both prose narrative and lyric seek to abolish in their various fashions, but upon maintaining which the vitality of artificial epic depends.

The heroic simile is one of the principal agencies of this separation and operates as a *sign* that some degraded and contingent empirical reality (the dreary anxiety of warfare, the privations of long journeys, persistent hard luck and the cheapness of human life) has been transmuted into monumental flourish or arabesque, that from the chaos of ordinary experience the eternal geometry of epic decoration has been disengaged:

> *Poi si rivolse, e parve di coloro*
> *che corrono a Verona il drappo verde*
> *per la campagna; e parve di costoro*
> *quelli che vince, non colui che perde.*

From a purely visual point of view, we see neither Messire Bruno as he hurries to rejoin his companions, nor the race at Verona; rather, the first action is narrated for us by Dante, and the second

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we *remember*. The contemporary allusion jogs a storehouse within the mind of what ought not too rapidly to be thought of as Platonic ideas or Jungian archetypes: some fund of memory-traces in which there persevere images of quintessential forms and movements, idealized gestures, that "formidable erosion of contours" of which Gide, after Nietzsche, liked to speak, a kind of stark simplification of the empirical. From such a source there rises, not the stricken face and trembling ribcage of some flesh and blood Olympic runner in a newsreel, but rather the eternal runner himself, shoulders flung back, billowed about by draperies, slowly letting off as the ribbon flutters slackly to the ground about his feet. It is in this sense that Mnemosyne presides over the epic, for the latter does not, like the novel, give us to see as though for the first time, but rather restimulates this older preexisting gestural repertoire.

In this way it can be said that the poet of artificial epic does not immediately compose with words but rather works, as with his most fundamental raw materials and building blocks, with just such perceptual and gestural archetypes, juxtaposing them, unifying them into the sensuous continuity of his narrative. The narrative, indeed, may be thought of as a pretext for the alignment and quasi-spatial exploitation of such physical perceptions as bodies in flight or ships at sea:

> Satan with less toil, and now with ease,
> Wafts on the calmer wave with dubious light,
> And, like a weather-beaten vessel, holds
> Gladly the port, though shrouds and tackle torn;
> Or in the emptier waste, resembling air,
> Weighs his spread wings. . .

waves in a storm:

> *Hi summo in fluctu pendent, his unda dehiscens*
> *terram inter fluctus aperit; furit aestus haerenis.*

the slow rotation of the heavenly bodies, but also the gesture of the sower:

> *et Ruth se demandait,*
> *Immobile, ouvrant l'oeil à moitié sous ses voiles,*
> *Quel dieu, quel moissonneur de l'éternel été,*

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Avait, en s'en allant, négligemment jeté
Cette faucille d'or dans le champ des étoiles.

The external form of the language (whether strophic composition, terza rima, or the hexameter itself) then seals and imitates this inner composition by gestural or perceptual unities: its metrical units serving as it were as the outer emblems or symbols of the substitution, for the flux of daily experience, of these new *essences;* as the imitation in the language itself of this unification and solidification of the disparate and the contingent.

It is no accident that alongside what we have called the satire-collage in Lewis, we find examples, as also in the Flaubert of the epic prose works, of *Salammbô* and *Hérodias,* of just such passages of epic decoration in the sense outlined above:

> Two birds, one immediately above the other, appear to be approaching the heavenly city. As however their bodies get sufficiently near, they are seen to be not two birds but one. What seemed like two is a large bird of unusual size holding something in its beak. Crossing the highroad at the further extremity of the camp, it describes a wide arc that takes it southward and to the rear of the Bailiff's court. Thence, flying with unhesitating precision, it sweeps towards the watching crowd. Skimming the summit of the official box, neck outstretched, its face seems, as it rushes overhead, like that of an ecstatic runner. It flies directly to a basalt slab situated between the Bailiff's enclosure and the ferry station. As it touches the heavenly soil a roar of faint trumpets comes from the city. At the same time a mirage rises from the further edge of the water, having the consistency and tint of the wall of a cheese, but cut into terraces full of drowsy movement which are reflected in the stream.

If, indeed, the aesthetic both of Flaubert and of Lewis allow for such shifting of gears between the satiric and the epic mode, this can only portend some fundamental similarity between the two structures, some essential analogy between their respective raw materials. The truth is that what we have called gestural archetypes *are in reality nothing but clichés also:* only they are, as it were, clichés before the fall, the received ideas of an older and socially more vital culture, of the pre-industrial city state with its festivals and armies, its personalized quasi-feudal power relationships, its sophisticated spectacles and its proximity to the life of the fields which surround it (and in this sense the life of the

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Bailiff's camp is a pre-industrial one also). In such a society, which has overcome what Marx and Engels call the "rural idiocy" of more primitive agrarian cultures, but which has not yet been systematized out of all proportion to the dimensions of human life by the development of capitalism, cliché and received idea are nothing more than the form taken by collective intelligence itself: they are the shared experience, gathered into images, of social life and of the *Gemeinschaft*.

So it is that the basic difference between artificial epic and what we have here called satire-collage, between the high style of *Salammbô* or of the above passage and the low style of *Tarr* or *Bouvard et Pécuchet,* is not in reality a structural difference between two types of language and two literary genres, but rather a socio-economic difference between two cultures or two moments of history. The satire-collage is the form taken by artificial epic in the degraded world of commodity production and of the mass media: it is artificial epic whose raw materials have become spurious and inauthentic, monumental gesture replaced by the cultural junk of industrial capitalism. So it is that the most authentic realization of the epic voice in modern times—an ideal of many centuries of Western culture—yields not some decorative and beautified pastiche, but rather the most jarring and energetic mimesis of the mechanical, and breathes a passionate revulsion for the standardized manipulations of contemporary existence.

4

There remains the problem of the ultimate motivation of such a stylistic practice, of the intent and the passion which energizes so many false sentences, tirelessly producing amalgams of words whose function is no longer to re-produce the real, but rather, as it were, to testify to our powerlessness to do so and to the inescapable contamination of the collective mind and of language itself. To articulate such a motivation and such an intent would be to reveal the whole epistemological dimension of Lewis' work.

All great art, however, at least in modern times, can be said to spring from a privation rather than a plenitude of being: its redoubled energies do not represent the tapping of sources of power unavailable to the writers of an earlier tradition, but rather reflect the massive and wellnigh impenetrable obstacles which

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literary production must overcome in the consumer age; and these obstacles may be articulated in any number of different ways: in the domain of literary history, as the exhaustion of inherited form; on the social plane, as the increasing unjustifiability of the artist himself, his loss of social status and function; on the sociological level, as the split between public institutions and private experience, and as the decay of the older forms of social life; psychologically, as the monadization and subjectification of individual existence, its degradation to statistical anonymity, or to the status of mere case history.

In such a situation, the prodigious energy with which Wyndham Lewis propagates his bristling mechanical sentences and transforms the reified world into a forbiddingly cubist surface may be thought of as a kind of coopting of the machine, a kind of expropriation of its alienated dynamism. For Lewis, indeed, the machine seems to have absorbed all the vitality of the human beings who are now dependent on it:

> After a brief disturbance within, there came a mighty purr from its recesses, then an outsize and very handsome dove-grey roadster emerged. Its blunt imposing head appeared unexpectedly quickly for such an important accouchement, riding with drowsy power over the obstructions of the uneven soil. Victor was at the wheel. This monster, as it moved across the yard was gathering speed; it melted ponderously through the ungated entrance at the side of the hotel, bellowing like a pole-axed bullock. A hand waved to it, unnoticed, from an upper window, the words 'Good Luck!' accompanied the flutter of the flesh, with salutation and godspeed. Next moment it had sunk away, with velvet self-effacement, rolling upon a carpet of rich dust, which changed into a low-lying fog upon the road, sucked in at the gateway for some time after the great car had departed.

Such an apparition, at the very climax of the *Revenge for Love,* stands as the very archetype of what Sartre has called the practico-inert, that anti-freedom, that malignant destiny, which men create for themselves by the very investment of their own labor in its products, labor power which then returns against them in the hostile and unrecognizable form of a mechanical and inhuman destiny. At the same time, the motor-car is the very locus of metonymic fission, which as it is transmitted to ever more distant circles of objects ends by drawing life itself (the organic death of

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the bullock, the "flutter of flesh" waving goodbye) into its mechanical primacy.

It is thus not so much a substance, not so much a thing, as rather a center, a field of force: so it seems to bear Victor and Margot forward of its own will upon their fatal journey: for Margot it stands for an uncontrollable destiny which nonetheless requires our own collusion and complicity as well: "To devour miles and eat up minutes, in gulp after gulp, use must be made of *her* organs, so it seemed, as well as its own. Under her feet she had a time-eating and space-guzzling automaton, rather than a hackneyed means of transport, however horridly high-powered. It was *her* time, too, it was gobbling up—under great pressure, in big passionate draughts." So paradoxically monadic isolation is overcome, but as though by a grisly misunderstanding, through some blind alienation from without, which cannot be understood but merely felt, like the wrenching away, in wind and flood, of some windowless dwelling.

Yet this painful dislocation of consciousness, battered from without by the meteoric storm of history, now at last provides material for narration and can be expressed: it is, no doubt, still a highly subjectivized expression, for the monad still only sees the shadows on its own wall, and what is so vivid for it is still only its private experience of some ultimate *Ding-an-sich* which it will never be in any position to see directly. Yet reality is present, if only as the absent cause of what are very real subjective effects:

> Meanwhile trees, rocks, and telegraph-poles stood up dizzily before her and crashed down behind. They were held up stiffly in front of her astonished eyes, then snatched savagely out of the picture. Like a card-world, clacked cinematographically through its static permutations by the ill-bred fingers of a powerful conjurer, everything stood on end and then fell flat. He showed you a tree—a cardboard tree. Fix your eye upon this! he said. Then with a crash it vanished. Similarly with a segment of cliff. Similarly with a telegraph-pole. Her head ached with the crash of images. Every time a telegraph-pole fell down she felt the shock of its collapse in the picture-house of the senses.

The instinctive greatness of Lewis was, I think, to have understood that even where the real is ultimately inaccessible we are not for all that necessarily reduced to silence. The impressionistic way is to keep faith with the illusions of subjectivity, lovingly

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to reproduce them in the detail of their appearance: Lewis' expressionism, on the other hand, marks those illusions with the stamp of the illusory, keeping the place of the real warm by deforming its caricatural substitutes in the realm of phenomena.

So it is that Margot comes face to face with the most indigestible fact of external reality itself, that which cannot be interiorized for it spells the very obliteration of the monad itself, namely death, in the person of the *guardia civil* looming a moment in the roadster's path. The dead guard, who unites for the lovers the guilt of killing with the certainty of their own death sentence, represents some ultimate reality too scandalous to penetrate the mind, a reality that blows upon us in fitful, intermittent snatches, like a word on the tip of our tongue or an understanding we cannot quite recapture. So for Margot this ultimate glimpse of what defeats man, of that by which love itself is annihilated:

> Far worse than that, she discovered herself at last watching against her will the floodlit stretch of rust-red road. Plumes of dust were spurting up; but their car (it had left her behind) was rapidly disappearing and had already grown quite small, in diminishing perspective; while in the foreground she was staring down at a disagreeable flattened object. Sprawling in the centre of the road, it was incredibly two-dimensional and, in short, unreal. It might have just been painted upon the earth. But it looked more like a big untidy pattern, cut out of black paper, except for what was the face. That was flat, as well—as flat as a pancake, but as pale as a sheet, with a blue smear where the chin was. It was the chin of Prussian-blue. The flat black headgear of a Civil Guard, likewise no thicker than cardboard, lay a foot away from the head.

So the trick is turned, and the impossible picture seen in all its impossibility! This astonishing passage is of course Margot's attempt to visualize the guard's corpse; and there can be no doubt that in some regressive and prelogical corner of our minds, it is our most spontaneous first thought, that a man run over by a car is as flat as a pancake (as well as pale as a sheet). Unlike Margot, however, on her childish and naive level, unlike Lewis, on his sophisticated one, we ourselves repress the first thought, and the reality principle demands of us some more adult and scientific adequation. Yet we emerge from that earlier, naive vision empty-

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handed, into a linguistic or perceptual void in which we no longer quite know what to say about the body: bloodied, bruised, broken in strange places like a doll—all of these are a whistling in the dark, they fail to convey any real vision, instead they are themselves attempts to stimulate artificially such a vision, which is not forthcoming.

Yet Lewis' is not a child-art; unlike, say, a Faulkner, he does not attempt to do justice to the existential limits of the child's prerational consciousness. On the contrary, his is a critique of Margot's immaturity and of the cultural forces which have left her thus defenseless; and the child-vision is here, as it were in Hegelian fashion, cancelled and assimilated to a higher form in which it is preserved even while being denied on its own terms. It is as though language overcame some initial muteness before the incommensurability of experience (Mallarmé's sterility, the silences of modern literature and modern music, of modern philosophy) by finally concluding, in a "bustling" and energetic gesture, that since it cannot tell us what to see, it will tell us what we would have seen had we been able to do so. Since there exists no adequate language for "rendering" the object, all that is left to the writer is to tell us how he would have rendered it had he had the means to do so. There thus comes into being a language beyond language, shot through with the jerry-built quality of modern industrial civilization, brittle and impermanent, yet full of a mechanic's enthusiasm. Lewis' style is thus an exemplary and violent figure for the birth of all living speech: for there is a sense in which all speaking is a second-best, a substitute for the plenitude of some primary language. Yet the very notion of such a plenitude is a mirage; and all speech must settle its accounts with the optical illusion of a natural language if it is to be delivered from a terrorized reduction to silence. So Lewis' style, the only true English futurism, an immense hangar in which we may still learn to tap the almost extinct sources of verbal production, does not in the clattering, deafening noise of its own mechanical emergence seek to be preserved as an object for contemplation but rather consents to abolish itself in time, freeing us in turn from the fetishistic spell of style itself.

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ISABEL CASSERES

Moraima

Moraima, from these castle walls
where once you lived, away in Spain,
so many ghosts my book recalls,
I cannot see you plain;

but know your hair was shadow-black,
your little hands as light as moths,
and all around you, front and back,
a drift of colored cloths.

Song

From the high valleys of Peru
my Love came down;
with somber hat and striped shawl
she entered town.

She wears eleven petticoats
against the cold.
My Love is very very small,
and very old.

A Haunting

. . . And do you live within that house,
o dark of hair, eyes like the sea?
Great longings lift my heart beyond
the moments that I see;

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as through the window closed across the day
I watch your shoulders move aside,
the shape of life, unseizable
on the retreating tide.

Oh, step for once beyond the door,
where in the sun the branches sway,
where grasses are the golden floor;
be for a moment clear, no more,
and let me turn away.

The Stones of Rio

There where I used to be,
beneath those stars unknown to me before,
down the long miles, by the Atlantic sea,
stand the great stones of Rio on the shore.

Those who have seen them as in reverie
through the white mist of noon remotely spaced
have known the outline of eternity;
the ultimate design of beauty traced
full near,
those who have seen their dawning
dark and clear
through the blue mist of morning.

And on the long white beach extending there
as to infinity
the people walk in that dream-colored air
that rises from the sea.

Over and down, five thousand miles or more,
far down, the green Atlantic curving by,
stand the great stones of Rio on the shore,
touching the sea and sky.

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Four Ballads in Yellow

(from the Spanish of Federico García Lorca)

1

On the distant hill there grows
one green tree that stands alone.

Shepherd,
as you come and go.

Somnolent the olive grove
sloping to the plain below.

Shepherd,
as you come and go.

You have neither flock nor grove
dog nor crook nor any love.

Shepherd, as you come.

You dissolve, a shade of gold,
in the yellow wheat that blows.

Shepherd,
as you go.

2

Golden lies
the earth at noon.

Golden O
the shepherd boy.

No star shining,
and no moon.

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Golden O
the shepherd boy.

A dark girl, at harvest time,
reaps the tears that flood the vine.

Golden O
the shepherd boy.

3

Two oxen, red,
in a field of gold.

Oxen have the rhythm
of ancient bells
and the eyes of birds.
They are for mornings
of mist, and yet
they push into the orange
of summer air.
Old from their birth
they have no master,
and they remember the wings
that once grew from their sides.
Oxen
go sighing even now
through the fields of Ruth
in search of the ford,
the eternal ford;
drunk with brilliance of stars,
ruminating their sorrows.

Two oxen, red,
in a field of gold.

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4

I am walking over
the daisy sky.

I imagine today
that I am a saint.
They placed the moon
in my hands.
I placed it again
in space
and the Lord gave me a prize;
the rose and the halo.

I am walking over
the daisy sky.

And on my way
across this field
I will free the girls
from their wicked suitors
and give gold coins
to all the boys.

I am walking over
the daisy sky.

EDWIN BROCK

Fox at Winterton

All night the gale
had brought glass
wood and bodies
from the sea

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using sand to make
a decent burial

leaving the beach
as ordered as
an Escher cemetery
each mound a mystery
except where a wing
or beak broke through
like weed.

I gave each one
a casual rite
dispensing death
like a clergyman
until I stopped
at a shape
as shocking as
a scream in church:

its red fur
stained the sand,
its head was chewed
into a fanged skull
and ten inches of rope
grew from its spine

yet enough of fox
remained to make
me flinch
expecting the massacre
to jump and snap and
infect my clean skin
with God knows what wounds

even walking away
I looked back
unless its stumps
stalked me along the beach:

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not until another month
of tides had turned
it into tame bones
would I accept it.

This creature contained
so much life
its death shrieked,
shaming the quiet cough
that takes us
so barely alive
the air settles
where we were
without a sound.

RICHARD PEVEAR

Constructivist Poetry

Tall trees grow on the hills of history.
When we cut them down
The god inside is set free, he stomps off
Covered with sawdust.
The remains are used for poems.
We no longer build houses.
But the heart of the constructivist poem
Ticks like the little house-shaped clocks
They sell as souvenirs of the Black Forest.
Inside the constructivist poem
Wooden gears turn
Awkwardly, marking time, while nostalgia
Pulls the cast iron pine cones down.
And behind a trick door
The beautiful past
Waits to leap out with its revolutionary cry.

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JOHN SIMON

Theatre Chronicle

JOSEPH PAPP'S HIGHLY-TOUTED and nationally televised production of *Much Ado About Nothing* was directed by A. J. Antoon, the young director who did so well by *That Championship Season.* It is yet another attempt to bring Shakespeare closer to the masses by transplanting him to a milieu that is nearer to a contemporary audience but still remote enough for exotic local color. So Renaissance Messina became the Southwestern U.S.A. around the time of the Spanish-American War. Ming Cho Lee's set was an abstract construction of metal pipes and sepia turn-of-the-century posters, the whole thing surmounted by a permanently waving, pop-art American flag. The women were costumed as Gibson Girls, the men wore Rough Rider uniforms or Edwardian civvies, mostly old-fashioned blazers and ice-cream suits. Dogberry and his constabulary became Keystone Kops, sometimes riding in on an angrily huffing and puffing vintage automobile, sometimes performing a real Mack Sennett chase. Peter Link's background music, often obliterating the dialogue, was a mixture of mild country western and Gay Nineties nostalgia, and incorporated some Scott Joplin rags. Occasionally, an actor would burst out with a snatch of an old song hit like "Singin' in the Rain." Benedick delivered one of his soliloquies in a canoe that came sailing in on a turntable, on which, too, Hero and the other women rode in veiled, in the final scene, on carousel horses. At a party, the women stole away to smoke clandestine cigarettes; free beer was dispensed to the populace; photographers took pictures of the assembled worthies with old-fashioned flares. Benedick served Beatrice a little intimate champagne supper; the wedding at the end was a piñata party, with the couples spearing the bull-shaped piñata which proceeded to rain its multicolored blessings upon them.

What are the consequences of this? First, that the language jars horribly against the visual elements. But this is considered unimportant by people who are only too eager to share their tonedeafness with the rest of the world. Secondly, the grafted-on, irrelevant gags considerably overshadow and obscure the deeper, less obvious, wit of the playwright. Thirdly, by concentrating on these farcical addenda, the director and actors forget all about the real meanings of the play—assuming that they ever bothered to discover them. As examples of the first problem, I cite the whole business of Hero's supposedly lost chastity, which in the Texas of Teddy Roosevelt

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could hardly be a matter of life or death and hence must become a ridiculous charade. Does a grand moment like "Kill Claudio!" mean much against a background of the Rio Grande and Pancho Villa? Above all, one keeps wondering why do they all talk so "funny"? As an example of the second, let me adduce the fact that the opening-night audience, convulsed by the Keystone Kops and delighted by Hero's clutching a huge teddy bear as she rose from her last virginal sleep on her supposed wedding day, rewarded the most sparkling repartee with only perfunctory titters. And as evidence of the third, let me stress that the two main themes—that appearances lie and we are tricked by what our senses note (much ado about *noting*), and that Messina is a society suffering from an access of materialism—were just about ignored.

When you add to this actors untrained in Shakespeare and, for the most part, not much good for anything else either (the Claudio of Glenn Walken was a callow high-school kid; the Beatrice of Kathleen Widdoes one smug *moue* after another), what hope is there? Well, if you can be amused by a Don John conceived as a take-off on Chaplin's Great Dictator (itself unfunny)—a farcical Hitler figure weltering all over the floor in impotent rage—you may have a great time. I myself found it funnier to hear two actors successively address a third as Don Paydro and Don Peedro. Still, Douglass Watson was able to make something out of Don Pedro; and Sam Waterston, though a rather obvious Benedick, was at least consistent and, at times, fairly droll—in fact, the whole business of his eavesdropping as he hides behind his canoe held upright, moving in closer with it and once almost dropping it in amazement at what he overhears, was one of Antoon's few successful conceits. But are these and a very few other like felicities worth our absenting ourselves from Shakespeare for a long, long while?

Papp's offerings at his Public Theatre were, last winter, equally uninviting. He opened the season with *Wedding Band,* a mild and insignificant period piece about an interracial affair in the World-War-One South, written by the black playwright Alice Childress and uninspiredly co-directed by her and Papp himself. The next offerings were *The Children,* a pretentious, pseudo-poetic, appalling piece of claptrap by one Michael McGuire, and *Siamese Connections* by Dennis J. Reardon, almost equally unpalatable. Both plays dealt with turbid doings on American heartland farms turgidly: McGuire's was Hibernian Gothic, Reardon's bottom-drawer O'Neill. More ludicrous than either, but no more tolerable, was an all-black production of *The Cherry Orchard,* conceived by James Earl Jones and directed by Michael Schultz. The black cast proved not only unsuited to the play's milieu and unequal to the stylistic demands, but also, in most cases, woefully amateurish. Yet this sorry occasion elicited raves from many

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white critics, and several black theatrical personages published statements to the effect that black actors could even teach white actors how to play their own classics. Few of the latter could benefit from the lesson, for the production closed in short order.

All this is worth pondering because Joseph Papp has been chosen to take over the Vivian Beaumont and Forum Theatres in Lincoln Center, which, at best, strikes me as overextending one man's energies. But when I consider that Papp has announced that he will produce mostly new American plays on the main stage, and mostly Shakespeare in the tiny Forum, my wariness gives way to apprehension. What contemporary American dramatists are writing plays big enough for such a vast house, and how, conversely, do you fit Shakespeare into a thimble? If Papp can do it (he must also raise five million dollars—but that, as a master impresario, he is much more likely to accomplish), he will be unique in our theatre history: a one-man cartel holding virtually every significant New York institutional theatre in his fist. He will be pope and emperor in one, Papoleon the First.

Broadway once again managed to come up with only a brace of notable "serious" plays—both of them, as usual, British. *Butley,* by Simon Gray, was a smash in London, where Harold Pinter directed it and Alan Bates starred; Bates repeated his triumph here. The play concerns the disintegration of a professor of English at London University as teacher and as human being—one of those wry and raucous disintegrations the contemporary theater abounds in, as enjoyable for the victim as for the spectators. But "victim" is hardly the word for Ben Butley, specialist in T. S. Eliot, about whom he is writing a never-to-be-finished study; for Butley is the captain of his soul—it's just that he prefers to scuttle it. He does it with style: wounding epigrams, feral games, ingeniously nasty stratagems which, though they boomerang, first draw some blood from others. Butley is a homosexual, jealous of his former student and current colleague and lover, Joey, with whom he has been living. Joey has found a serious young man in publishing, Reg, and is about to leave Butley for him. Ben's wife, Anne, the mother of their daughter, Marina (named after the Shakespearean heroine and the Eliot poem), has long since moved out of their home to let in Joey; now she is ready to marry Tom, an earnest, hard-working teacher and writer whom Ben especially despises. And then there is Gardner, the cocky young student who might become Butley's next lover.

The play depicts how Butley undoes himself with all three of them—Anne, Joey and Gardner—thus almost simultaneously throwing away his past, present and future. There are also a girl student and a woman professor who illustrate Butley's abuse of his students and falling short of mediocre but diligent col-

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leagues, which will eventually cost him his job. The play, then, is an agglomeration of disasters heaped, or self-heaped, on Butley's head, laughable and laughingly courted, but disasters none the less. The play exaggerates for comic effect yet is, at times, insufficiently witty; it does, however, provide enough raw material for a canny director and skilled actors to create on stage something wickedly funny and even, ultimately, affecting. "Poor old Anne," Butley says of his conventional wife, "she must have felt her share amounted to a minor infidelity, really. I speak metaphorically, of course, but then I suppose marriage is the best metaphor for all our intense relationships. Except those we have with our husbands and wives. (*Laughs.*) Naturally." This is sophisticated writing, with a nice sense of character and style. One notes the importance of paradox which, as I have recently argued in these pages, is the homosexual stylistic device *par excellence.* It is aptly used here: it is right for Butley, who has jettisoned family life and the concomitant sense of security and respectability, to view "marriage" as a particularly desirable, because lost, concept and metaphor; as a homosexual and unhappy ex-husband, he will, at the same time, wish to minimize and even ridicule the person one is actually married to. The clever paradox rests on a sound psychological foundation. Even that seemingly trifling "naturally" has its function here: *naturally* marriage cannot be a metaphor for itself, but if you say *naturally* with a naughty snigger, you begin to imply that there is something unnatural about the whole business, that marriage is really far too unmarriagelike.

Not all of Gray's humor is of this high an order. But then there was Alan Bates playing Butley—rather more broadly than he did in London, yet with an exaggeration that smacked more of bravura than of excess. A fellow who could go to the dogs in such lavish high spirits, with such sprightly, almost acrobatic, impudence, deserves our admiration if not our approbation. And Bates did abate his fireworks from time to time to let in some pathos. He was ably supported by Hayward Morse as Joey and Geraldine Sherman as a mauled but unbowed girl student; the others, under James Hammerstein's direction, were less good, perhaps because they were too American.

The Changing Room, by David Storey, is documentary theatre with social implications and symbolic overtones. It takes place in the locker room (changing room) of a North-of-England Rugby League team, a bunch of semi-professionals ranging from miners and mill workers to a few teachers and such. The play covers the period from just before to just after a game and includes among its characters the team owner, a successful, knighted businessman, the club secretary, the players, coaches, trainers, referee, masseur and, at the bottom of the hierarchic scale, the

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cleaner, a crazy old man muttering about the cold weather being part of a sinister Russian plot to Communize the world. This spectrum, extending from bluffly jovial but shrewdly calculating owner, through various intermediary stages, down to semidemented drudge, gives the play its slice-of-life, societal-cross-section aspect. There is some suggestion of the slackening and reshuffling of the caste system, but also a clear sense of its persisting all the same.

Principally, though, the play is an almost *cinéma-vérité* rendering of the shedding of civilian identities to become players and teammates; of the effort and dirtying, the injuries and pain that make up the game; of the elation and rowdy horseplay after the victory; and of the changing back into civilians, with the locker room becoming once again a soiled, disheveled disaster area for the cleaner to confront with his grudging, cantankerous ministrations. But here the title itself becomes significant: *The Changing Room,* the space in which a change comes to pass. The owner has moved up the social scale, some of the players have improved their status by becoming star athletes; others, cuckolded by their very buddies, have been pushed down the ladder. Yet, in a deeper sense, nothing changes in this changing room. Sir Frederick, even if he insists on being Freddie to his players, is just as much of a despot as if he were to the manner born; the team captain will have to retire next year, but another like him will take his place; some fellows are in favor, some out of it; but the game, the system, life itself, continue unchanged and, perhaps, unchangeable. Now although this is a lovely, multilayered metaphor, this unchanging room, with a nice irony to it, it does not make for much drama. Despite all the flurries of excitement when muddied and bloodied players are brought on, one of them with a fiercely aching broken nose; or when, after the game, the men chase one another in and out of the shower with lewd remarks and wet towels cracking on naked bodies; there is nowhere for the play to go. The cycle is predetermined and predictable: expectancy and rising pre-game excitement; tension alternating with chatter among those who watch the game from the locker room and listen to it on the P.A. system; jubilation, raillery and assorted shenanigans afterward; and, finally, the dying fall as the players, back in mufti, depart one by one as in the Farewell Symphony, leaving the rest to silence and the lowly cleaner.

David Storey is a minimalist, as we know from such other plays of his as *Home* and *The Contractor.* Within his narrow range, he works with sure and suggestive brushstrokes. But such is the duration of a play that it requires more brushstrokes to fill it out than are consistent with minimalism. The minutiae have a way of becoming too numerous for stark simplicity, and still remaining

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too minute. There is also, in the current production, which originated at New Haven's Long Wharf Theatre, a loss in naturalism: the American actors cannot muster convincing British regional dialects, though they try manfully. On the other hand, Michael Rudman, an American transplanted to Edinburgh, where he runs a theatre, has directed the play with great authenticity and full savoring of the kaleidoscopic patterns of sight and sound as the stage fills up with bodies and voices, numerous random movements converge into one, and the helter-skelter of street clothes turns into the homogenized motley of uniforms. The rhythms are all there, as are the master images; it is not Rudman's fault if the rest of the prosody is a bit thin.

Generally, however, it has been a disappointing season, hardest to take being the revivals of old and newer classics. The Circle in the Square inaugurated its new but pedestrianly designed uptown quarters with an excruciating production of *Mourning Becomes Electra,* which would defy even a far better director than Theodore Mann to breathe some life into it. No need to expatiate here on what Bentley, Brustein and a number of others (myself included) have sufficiently argued and, I hope, demonstrated: that middle-period O'Neill, especially the more bloated and pretentious items, simply does not work any more, if ever it did. The next production there was the *Medea* of Euripides, adapted and directed, equally poorly, by Minos Volanakis. The translation was an uneasy mixture of the contemporary and the faintly poetic and archaic; the scenery by Robert Mitchell was weird without evoking anything in particular—granted, the arena stage and low ceiling are inimical to effects like the dragon-drawn chariot; and the costumes by Nancy Potts were an olla podrida of periods and styles, all ugly. Some characters wore masks, some not, some part of the time; some actors tried unconvincingly for a classical style while others remained, equally unconvincingly, contemporary. As Medea, Irene Papas lacked tragic grandeur; indeed, she could never make me feel strongly either for or against her. Her English, moreover, was not good enough to listen to for sustained passages meant to be poetry. Bernard Shaw once wrote to Gilbert Murray, "Medea is a big thing that breaks through all mere prudences"; Miss Papas, however, remained painfully sensible to the last.

The Phoenix Repertory Theatre Company resuscitated itself briefly as The New Phoenix Repertory Theatre Company, which looked no better than the old—either because the Arabian bird is reborn identical each time or else because mediocrity has a way of looking always the same. The two alternating bills were *The Great God Brown* and Molière's *Dom Juan.* For the former, ineptly cast, stodgily directed by Harold Prince, and clumsily

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designed by Boris Aronson, the above comments about middle-period O'Neill, once again, hold sadly true. The Molière, directed by Stephen Porter rather too glibly, hurriedly and with some curious quirks, nevertheless came off better, though it was unfortunate that John McMartin's Sganarelle was so much more interesting than Paul Hecht's Don. The women in both plays were incompetent and unprepossessing. Another *Don Juan,* this one *in Hell,* being the usually omitted act of Shaw's *Man and Superman,* reappeared as a staged reading with an all-not-quite-star cast, in which only Ricardo Montalbán, as the protagonist, managed to do justice to the somewhat stilted but still engaging verbal pyrotechnics. The Repertory Company of Lincoln Center came up with a humdrum, heterogeneous rendering of *The Plough and the Stars,* in which Jack MacGowran, the Irish character actor, gave by far the best performance as Fluther Good. Alas, he died during the play's run. This was followed by Ellis Rabb's intolerable mounting of *The Merchant of Venice,* in modern dress, heavily cut, with offensive interpolations, and generally badly acted. The Christians were a bunch of irresponsible hedonists, homosexual and anti-Semitic to a man, whereas Shylock was a noble, indeed heroic, figure, cruelly wronged but staunchly bearing up under the injustices showered upon him.

André Gregory and his Manhattan Project offered a version of *Endgame* having little to do with Beckett. Though the text was all there, oodles of new stage business, verbal improvisation and irrelevant horsing around were stuffed in throughout, from which force-feeding the play swelled out to almost twice its natural size. The effect of this interpolated parade of threadbare burlesque routines was, besides unutterable cheapness, one of Hamm and Clov having a rattling good time together; if they suffered at all, it was from a mild case of hypochondriacal *weltschmerz,* itself only a kind of game. Even Hamm's parents—those pitiful elders now inhabiting a laundry basket and a cardboard container instead of the prescribed ashcans—were having so much fun that, propelled by them, their containers danced all over the stage to the tunes hummed by Hamm and Clov.

Tennessee Williams continued his public decomposition with an item called *Out Cry,* the very spelling of the title emblematic of Williams's desperate striving for originality, even if it amounts to no more than an extra empty space. The play, already produced in at least two other cities under a different title, is like all of its author's more recent works a combination of bloodless blather and unintentionally parodistic self-imitation. It concerns a brother and sister abandoned as mad by their theatrical troupe in an unnamed country, in what may or may not be a theatre and before what may or may not be an audience. They are broke and des-

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perate and possibly insane, but proceed gallantly to enact their "Two-Character Play" about an orphaned brother and sister (their father killed their mother and himself), destitute and scarcely daring to leave the house in quest of food. There is very little difference between the play and the play-within-the-play, and none in quality. It is all windy pastiche, with an awkward and belated bow to absurdism, as when the performing siblings find themselves mysteriously locked into that putative theatre. The thing that may or may not be dialogue is mostly on the level of, "Only the dead can get away with doing nothing, Clare." "Yes, they do get away with it very nicely." Or: "Your hair has grown so long, you look hermaphroditic." "Good. Thank you." On a deeper level, we get, "There are punctuation marks in life and they include periods, one of which is final," or this last exchange that sums up everything: "Magic is habit." "Magic is the habit of our existence."

Williams was, apparently, dramatizing the two components of his psyche: the more fearful, self-deluding side as a sister; the more persistent and pugnacious side, as a brother. But this rather barren metaphor cannot sustain an inert two-character play for a whole evening, even if the writing were appreciably better than the piteous but representative examples I have quoted. Despite Clive Barnes's near-rave review—an aborted masterpiece of breathless equivocation trying to do double duty as an encomium—*Out Cry* promptly closed. This proves at least, if the author's contention that only the dead can get away with doing nothing at all is right, that Williams is not quite dead as yet. It is a melancholy comment on the state of our theatre that its three most celebrated dramatists, Williams, Miller and Albee, have produced nothing but almost instant failures in the last few years. (Earlier this season, Miller's play about the Garden of Eden, *The Creation of the World and Other Business,* was so god-awful—I think I am using the term judiciously here—that I passed it over in my previous chronicle.) Exactly what this means I can only guess at, but the matter can certainly do with some speculation.

Now for the three most successful of Broadway's commodity comedies. Jean Kerr's *Finishing Touches* is merely *Mary, Mary* some ten years later, and not even that good. It centers on a nice middle-aging faculty wife and her comic troubles as mother and spouse, with everything coming up roses in the end, needless to say. The play's mentality is muscular, suburban and Catholic, with a clock in it at least a dozen years slow—which, in muscular, suburban, Catholic enclaves, may well be the official Greenwich or Larchmont time. It is all more or less autobiographical trivia, with the chitchat about household problems accurately enough

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reproduced, but the characters and insights remaining fuzzy and rudimentary. Even less funny, albeit sociologically more interesting, is *The Jockey Club Stakes,* an English import as thoroughly witless as it is totally amoral and, worse yet, anti-moral. It concerns three upper-class stewards of the Jockey Club looking into a case of alleged race-fixing. There is no need to rehearse the plot; suffice it to say that everybody in the play turns out to be crooked, which does not elicit from the author the least satiric castigation, revulsion or contempt, only smug satisfaction. It is implied, further, that the upper-class crooks are generally better at it than the lower-class ones, that the best the latter can hope for is admittance to the ranks of the former, and that whenever someone of either class appears to be motivated by righteous indignation, he is acting out of private vindictiveness or disguised greed waiting for a bigger bribe. The moral turpitude of the play is unrelieved by wit, the jokes being either labored, inchoate or off-target, which did not, however, prevent critics and audiences from turning the play into a hit.

Lastly, there is the new Neil Simon play, *The Sunshine Boys,* about two famous old-time vaudevillians, a great duo now on the outs with each other and living in uncomfortable retirement. They are brought together for the sake of a forthcoming major television show on the history of vaudeville, for which they are to recreate one of their immortal routines. This odd couple fights with all the rancor of long-divorced spouses who have never forgiven each other, their weapon the burlesque wit that was the tool of their trade. "I heard your blood didn't circulate." "It's not true; it circulates. Maybe not everywhere, but it circulates." Or: "Everybody has their ups and downs." "In 43 years we had maybe one ups." The very Jewish humor is mostly of the show-biz, insult and geriatric varieties, and there is even an elaborate Dr. Kronkheit-style skit for these Smith-and-Dalish funnymen to perform on TV. I found the humor shallow and ultimately irritating, the characters static and unsympathetic, and the plot puny and maudlin. None of this prevented the show from becoming an immediate success.

A much more modest but immodestly funny show is to be found off-Broadway—a British import that started out as *El Coca-Cola Grande,* until lawyers for that beverage compelled it to rename itself *El Grande de Coca-Cola.* It purports to be a series of internationally famous nightclub acts presented by Pepe Hernandez, "a third-rate impresario in a nightclub in a run-down section of Trujillo, Honduras." Pepe got the money from his uncle, who manages the local Coca-Cola bottling plant, and the performers are, in fact, four members of Pepe's willing, spirited but supremely untalented family. This is the flimsiest of pretexts

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for mounting a scarcely more than hour-long spoof on bad night-club acts (the sort Neil Simon might canonize), Latin American tawdriness and ostentation, and the Coca-Colonization of the world. But the show is surprisingly hilarious, for reasons not easy to pinpoint. One of them, surely, is Ron House, an American living in England, whose facial and vocal clowning is nothing short of exquisite. The whole thing is done in pidgin-Spanish with a heavy admixture of Americanisms, a good running linguistic gag. While House can out-Latin the Latins, the four others remain fairly British, which adds another dimension of absurdity. And if the acts are anything but stellar, the number of ways in which they manage to misfire is astronomic. Then, of course, the very shortness and smallness of the show is endearing. And The Low Moan Spectacular, as this talented young group calls itself, has hit on one additional low appeal: our repressed need for ethnic jokes, once a comic staple but now considered taboo, which is here allowed harmless release in spic-and-span spik jokes.

Three musicals demand mention. *Pippin* is a bit of medieval pseudo-history about a fictitious son of Charlemagne in search of ego-fulfillment. The book by Roger O. Hirson is balderdash, and Stephen Schwartz's tunes and lyrics are only slightly better. But the direction and choreography by Bob Fosse are ferociously inventive, tirelessly tossing out new or refurbished visual dazzlement, with the costumes, sets (by the ingenious Tony Walton) and lighting lending spectacular support. Several performers are very gifted, several are not; but there is a sort of commedia dell'arte chorus comprised of some of the liveliest and sexiest dancers around, and a few of the dances are truly, exhilaratingly erotic.

Seesaw is an overblown, watered-down and updated musicalization of William Gibson's two-character play, *Two for the Seesaw*. Though I have no particular love for the original, it had authentic flavor and a somewhat slick poignancy. The book, now credited to Michael Bennett, the director and choreographer, is well below the play, but does retain the basic situations and bits of the old dialogue to good effect. Cy Coleman's music is eclectic but serviceable, though Dorothy Fields's lyrics are lackluster. But Robin Wagner has devised sets based on Sheppard Kerman's projections of New York cityscapes onto a vast cyclorama, which prove splendidly evocative. Even if the costumes are fairly dismal, the dancers who wear them perform Bennett's modestly inventive but hugely enthusiastic choreography with absolute gusto. There are three principals now, Michele Lee, Ken Howard and Tommy Tune, and all three have charm, talent and versatility. It is an old-fashioned show, but quite pleasant for all its spottiness.

A Little Night Music is a free adaptation of Ingmar Bergman's

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great film comedy, *Smiles of a Summer Night*. I haven't the heart to go into the various ways in which Hugh Wheeler, the librettist, and Harold Prince, the director, have flattened, cheapened and grossly oversimplified this masterpiece. Both by additions and subtractions, they have turned comic subtlety with serious implications into crude jocularity without reverberations, except for an epicene sensibility that now infiltrates everything. But Stephen Sondheim has written some very clever lyrics to his own, almost too clever tunes that are sometimes too calculatedly different to be tuneful. At other times, though, they are graceful evocations of old waltzes, sounding different enough but not too different. Florence Klotz's costumes are as inventive as they seem authentic, but Boris Aronson's sets are only so-so, and the cast is extremely uneven. Most garish is Hermione Gingold, as Mrs. Armfeldt, a shrewd, autocratic old lady now turned into an odiously brash cocotte both by script and performance. And most miscast is Glynis Johns, as an actress at her sexual solstice, all irresistible, canny femininity. Miss Johns is a now somewhat overage tomboy, kittenish and raspy-voiced, precise and amusing in her delivery of lines but utterly, utterly unseductive. The show is a tremendous success, though most of its admirers somehow managed not to see the film. Yet I wonder, would I have enjoyed a comic-strip *Hamlet* just because I had not read or seen the original?

ROBERT S. CLARK

Opera at the Forum

FROM THE MOMENT, IN THE SPRING OF 1972, when the late Goeran Gentele announced that the Metropolitan Opera would inaugurate a "Piccolo Met," a small theater for the presentation of chamber opera and small-scale musical works unsuited to the splendid machinery of the Met stage, he had important segments of the artistic community in New York and elsewhere firmly on his side. Young singers, instrumentalists, and composers, the academic community, the press, the avant-garde, and a great many unclassifiables endorsed the idea—the Met's way, they agreed, of adding some velocity to the winds of change already

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issuing from the "Prospective Encounters" with contemporary music served up by Pierre Boulez and members of the New York Philharmonic and from other recent innovations in New York's musical life. Before Gentele, only the local music schools had regularly presented works of musical theater that lie outside the competence of the Metropolitan and the New York City Opera, and other occasional opportunities to hear such works well done—Charlotte Bergen's free Monteverdi at Carnegie Hall and Noah Greenberg's staging of *The Play of Herod* and *The Play of Daniel* in St. George's Episcopal Church come to mind—had been few. Fortunately, the idea did not die with Gentele last summer: Schuyler Chapin, now the acting general manager of the Met, followed through and chose Richard Dufallo, lately of the Conference on Contemporary Music at the Aspen (Colo.) Music Festival, as principal conductor and artistic advisor. The result was "Opera at the Forum"—informally, the "Mini-Met"—a three-week season of twenty-five performances in late February and early March, Virgil Thomson's *Four Saints in Three Acts* alternating with a double bill of Maurice Ohana's *Syllabaire pour Phèdre* and Henry Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas.*

The site of the presentations was the Forum Theater, a miniature amphitheater beneath the main stage of the Vivian Beaumont Theater at Lincoln Center. The Forum was something of a *cause célèbre* a few years ago when Jules Irving, who recently resigned his post as head of the Beaumont repertory theater and everybody's favorite whipping boy at Lincoln Center, proposed structural changes to the principal theater that would have meant relocating the Forum elsewhere in the Beaumont building. Do what you like to main stage, but "save" the Forum—so ran the consensus in excitable artistic circles. And so it was saved. Ironically, Irving had to cancel the Forum's most recent season for lack of funds, and the theater certainly need not have been saved to make it available for opera. In every way but one—its intimacy—it was ill suited for the Mini-Met. Acoustically it was cruel to music, and the absence of an orchestra pit meant that the conductor and instrumentalists had to be accommodated atop Ming Cho Lee's twenty-foot-high all-purpose structure at stage rear. The conductor faced the audience rather than his players, and kept in touch with singers and chorus below him by means of TV monitors located at three points high up in the lighting area on the outer rim of the auditorium. (Those gazes into the middle distance so beloved of actors trying to convey anguish had another motive on this occasion.) Then, too, the limitations of the small circular stage were often apparent: the casts of both *Dido* and *Four Saints* sometimes threatened to spill over the edges, and Alvin Ailey's fluently sweeping choreographic gestures for the lat-

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ter seemed to yearn for room to expand. There was another, more mundane problem: the Forum seated only 272 for the operas, and even though the Metropolitan's administration must have been gratified by the rapid sale of tickets, the box-office gross—at $5 and $6 a head, as Gentele had wished—surely left the accountants desiring a lot.

Four Saints in Three Acts, the first of the two operatic collaborations between Virgil Thomson and Gertrude Stein, has been with us now almost forty years—its premiere, in Hartford, Conn., was in 1934—and has found its way into a rather special niche in our common artistic consciousness. It has become one of those rare works that one dislikes at the risk of one's reputation for worldliness and perspicacity. Like *The Marriage of Figaro,* Stravinsky's early ballets, and the Brecht-Weill collaborations, to name a few others, it apparently need no longer abide our question. But the question takes shape in my mind nonetheless: is this state of affairs because of the work's quality, or because of the composer's adroit propaganda job for it? I have always found it easy to resist the oil-and-water mix of Stein's free-associative, lyrical word game about absolutely nothing—though, of course, the authors found it convenient to claim the lives of Saints Teresa of Avila and Ignatius Loyola as their subject—and Thomson's doggedly commonplace score spiced with the Protestant hymnal, ragtime, and Salvation-Army textures. Yet an occasional encounter with it can be diverting. Stein's words—their repetitions and contrasts, their combinations in larger sound patterns with climaxes and resolutions—are a music themselves, and when they are rendered as clearly and as gracefully as they were in the Forum production they are hypnotic enough to make Thomson's music all but inaudible.

The production was sensibly uncluttered (no sets but Lee's abstract structure, no props), constantly in motion, and unencumbered for the most part by superfluous "commentary" on the part of the director or the performers. Thomson attended rehearsals and presumably approved of the results. In an interview before the premiere, Alvin Ailey, the stage director, was quoted as saying, "I briefly flirted with a tongue-in-cheek approach, but Mr. Thomson objected. He wants it performed straight, in a saintly manner, but our young people find it hard." The impulse to treat *Four Saints* as "camp" (Harold Schonberg used that word to describe it in his *New York Times* review) is understandable but dangerous: to play it tongue-in-cheek would reduce it to intolerable farce, and the infrequent lapses of the performers into such an attitude—some Broadway-broad leers and shrugs—proved this beyond doubt. The audience was more amused when the singers betrayed no hint that the text sounded ridiculous to

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them. As the Commère, Betty Allen was a delightful and vivid presence, Arthur Thompson was a strong and stately St. Ignatius, and Clamma Dale and Hilda Harris sang simply and sweetly as Saints Teresa I and II. In the role of St. Settlement, Teresa's confidante, Barbara Hendricks displayed a voice of unusual quality and musicality of high calibre, and Roland Gagnon's sensitive conducting got the appropriate lilt and swing from the small orchestra.

Unlike *Four Saints,* both *Syllabaire pour Phèdre* and *Dido and Aeneas* place before the auditor compelling myths of human character in conflict with itself and with circumstances. *Syllabaire pour Phèdre* ("Spelling-book for Phaedra") is the work of Maurice Ohana, a Parisian of Andalusian descent and a fixture of the French avant-garde. The thirty-minute piece, on an elliptical text by Raphael Cluzel, calls for coloratura soprano, mezzo-soprano (Phèdre), three speaking voices (Hippolyte, Thesée, and the Coryphée), mixed chorus, two zithers (one tuned in 1/3-tones), harp, harpsichord, piano, percussion, and tape tracks. The composer describes the work as the result of "diverse experiments . . . in the relations between language and sound. The idea behind this work is to bring language, in the purely phonetic aspect of elements spoken, screamed, sung, or distorted by magnetic tape, into the service of an aural structure" embracing actors, singers, and instruments. Actually the work is a good deal tamer than this description makes it sound. It is the chorus that provides the backdrop of phonetic elements; the actors' text, though it eschews narrative progress, uses conventional syntax to convey the "archetypal essence"—the composer's words again—of the Phaedra myth. The taped passages, used with more feeling for the expressive possibilities and limitations of the medium than is generally the rule, were integrated into a theatrical whole of elegance and cumulative effect. From his perch above the stage—visible, in the podium light, from the waist up and looking like the author of the protagonists' fate—Richard Dufallo tied the elements of the performance together nicely. Nancy Williams (alternating with Elaine Bonazzi, whom I did not see, as Phèdre) and Michael Wager (Thesée) used their fine voices well, but Jean Forêt, the French actor who played Hippolyte, was weak. Though the standard of the Americans' French pronunciation was high—much higher than it was in the parent company's concurrent production of *Carmen*—I think the work would have had greater effect on the audience had it been done in English translation. Paul-Émile Deiber, the director, disregarded the composer's suggestion that the actors be "totally immobile," and had them deliver their lines as they rather pointlessly circled and mounted

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Ming Cho Lee's truncated cone of silver rods at stage center. But all in all, the "ritual of gestures, lighting, colors, profiles, and volumes" the composer asks for was well realized.

Purcell's *Dido and Aeneas,* a masterpiece modest in every way but in its impact, followed. Written in 1689 for the girls of Mr. Josias Priest's boarding school in Chelsea, it is the composer's only completely sung theatrical work, a fusion of elements of the English masque, polyphonic choral writing stemming from the English madrigalists, and highly inflected Italian-style recitative and airs for the soloists. The binding force is, as Purcell's contemporary Henry Playford put it, the composer's "peculiar genius to express the Energy of English words whereby he moved the Passions in all his Auditors." It is a genius that transforms the frequent banality of Nahum Tate's libretto. Take, for example, what the composer does with the opening line of Dido's first air. Tate wrote, "Ah, Belinda, I am prest/With torment not to be confessed." Purcell phrases it thus: "Ah, Belinda/I am prest with torment/not to be confessed"—four measures, three, and two respectively, the whole line running above a steady four-measure ground bass. He secures aural variety with economical means, and a gravity and terseness of statement befitting the "injured queen." Such inventiveness is apparent throughout the work, after three centuries still the greatest English opera, and if it alone survived of Purcell's scores it would be enough to erase the Teutonic slur that England is a *"Land ohne Musik."*

In contrast to the bold colors and plush fabrics of Jane Greenwood's costumes for *Four Saints,* her Augustan gowns for *Dido* were lightweight, pastel blues and browns against ivory, gold, and white, and Paul-Émile Deiber's stylized movements and carefully arranged tableaux were affecting and appropriate. In spite of the fact that much of the supporting solo singing was just adequate the night I attended, the performance had what it takes to succeed: a well-drilled chorus and a good pair of royal lovers. I did not see Evelyn Lear and Thomas Stewart, Dido and Aeneas the first two evenings; Nancy Williams and Lenus Carlson filled the roles for the eleven remaining performances, and both were worthy of the assignment. Carlson sang with a noble cleanliness of line. Miss Williams was touching and vulnerable, but a bit too passive for the proud queen who dismisses Aeneas with the words, "For 'tis enough, whate'er you now decree,/That you had once a thought of leaving me." Perhaps she did not generate enough force because she risked a damaging amount of vibrato when she let her strong mezzo voice out fully.

The musical production was no model of seventeenth-century style: the singing in particular often lacked crispness of articulation, and there was an insufficient supply of such "graces" as turns

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and cadential *appoggiature*. The autograph score of *Dido and Aeneas* is lost, and the conductor's choice among several realizations, based on existing manuscript copies and an appreciation of the stylistic conventions of the time, sets the tone for a performance. Dufallo chose Benjamin Britten and Imogen Holst's version, an intelligent and scholarly job that is nevertheless conservative in showing the customary graces. And unless my ears deceived me (it was impossible to follow a score in the theater), some that Britten-Holst specify were omitted. Dufallo led an otherwise capable performance, and the ensemble was remarkably good considering the handicaps of the theater—the dry acoustics of which, furthermore, did nothing to obscure the soloists' more than occasional deviations from true pitch.

Dufallo and his associates are now looking for a more commodious home for the Mini-Met. The superb 950-seat Juilliard Theater, acoustically the finest auditorium in the music-school complex, would be close to ideal, and it remains to be seen whether Juilliard's president, Peter Mennin, will alter his determination to keep the Theater free of commercial taint and strictly for student use. Taking the long view, an artistically worthy idea has been fleshed out well enough to assure it a longer life, and that, I suppose, should suffice. In the short run, however, the Mini-Met raised questions that it answered only partially. The choice of repertoire for the inaugural season was a natural target for criticism, and some of the powerful took aim: a *New York Times* critic, for one, held *Syllabaire pour Phèdre* up to ridicule. But the choices seem to me to have been made on sound principles, and to suggest the range of the available repertoire. They were two entertaining and stimulating evenings in the theater, even though neither was transporting. And that qualification leads to another question: will the obvious attractions of a project of this kind—novelty, intimacy, ensemble polish—be enough, or will it be necessary to invite internationally prominent conductors and singers to participate, especially in the presentation of older works, in order to retain the allegiance of the audience? The season past did not answer that question satisfactorily. In any case, the Mini-Met looks as if it can provide a valuable historical perspective on music theater, a demonstration that the elaborate vocal pageants to be seen elsewhere at Lincoln Center are not the whole of the operatic tradition, and certainly not all of its present and future. If, as certain prophets such as Eric Salzman are saying, an important embryonic development of today's avant-garde is a species of total theater drawing upon music, poetry, dance, mime, and various kinds of aural and visual technology—a new electronified *Gesamtkunstwerk*—then the Mini-Met might be an artistic curator and midwife at the same time.

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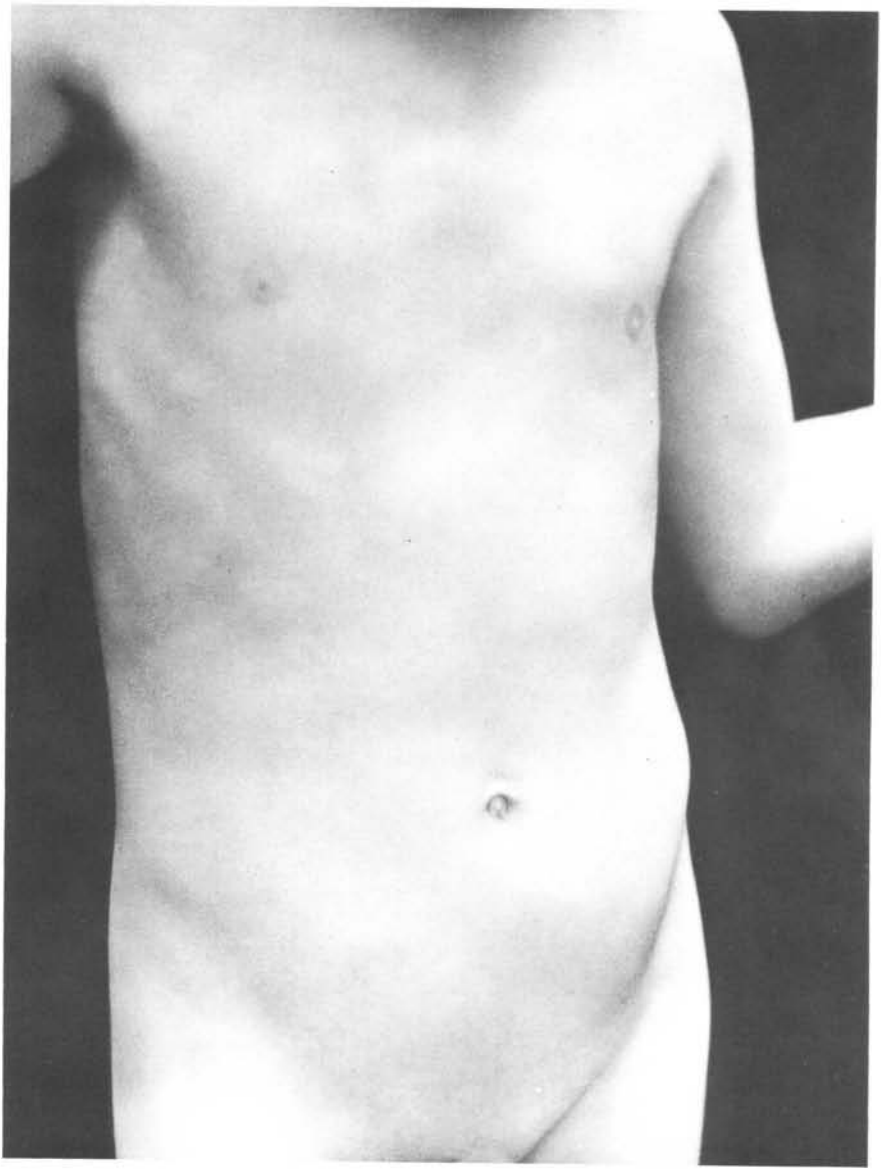

EDWARD WESTON *Nude* 1925

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EDWARD WESTON
Pepper 1930

ANSEL ADAMS *Old Hearse* 1936

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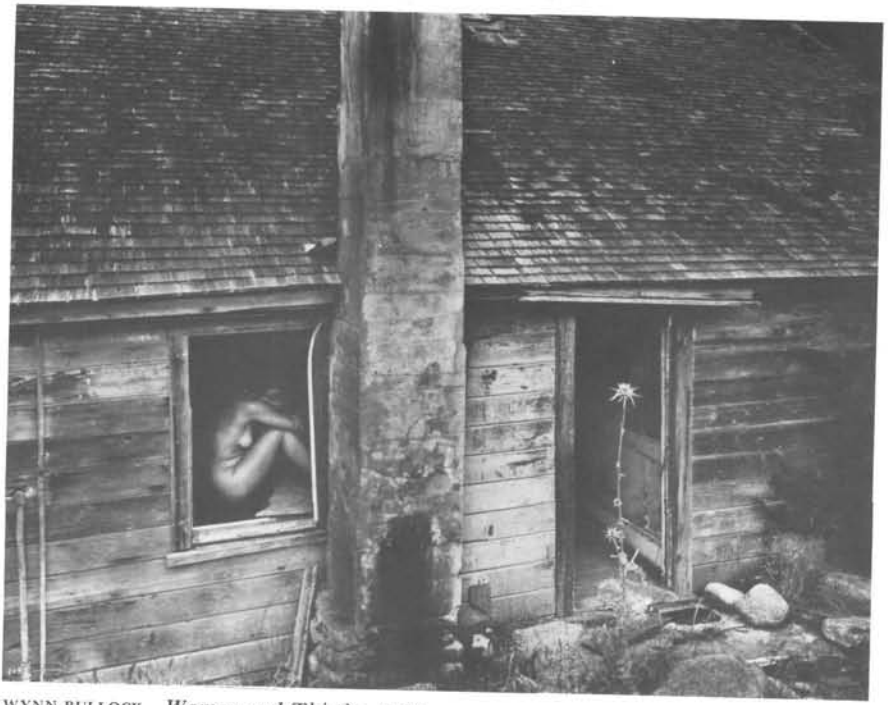

WYNN BULLOCK *Woman and Thistle* 1966

EDWARD WESTON *Civilian Defense* 1942

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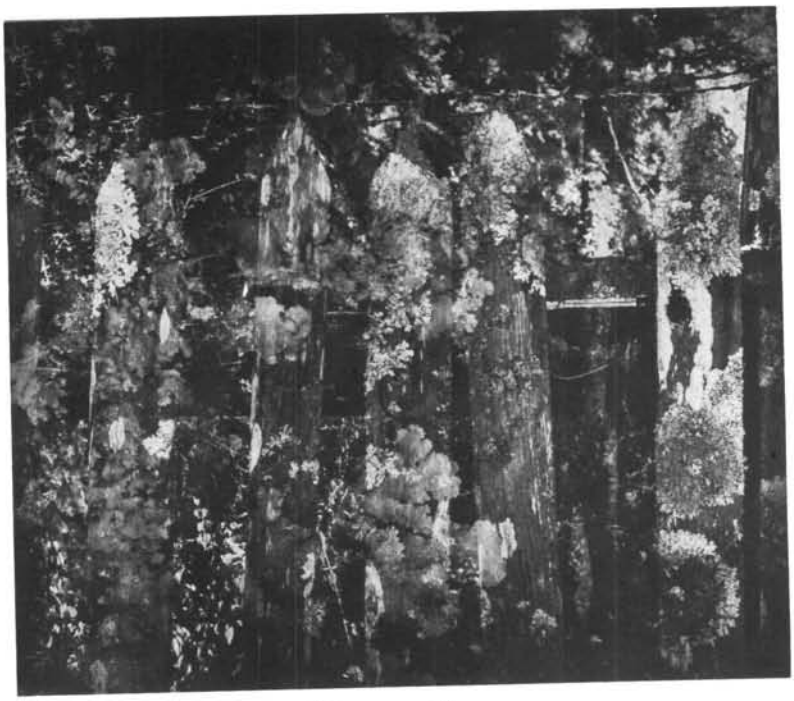

WYNN BULLOCK *Old Fence and Fungus* 1966

ANSEL ADAMS *Forest into Sun* 1940

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CHARLES W. MILLARD

Adams, Weston, Bullock

THE LARGE EXHIBITION OF PHOTOGRAPHS by three California old masters recently assembled by the Pasadena Museum of Modern Art brought home some surprising points about what each of the three has done during the last fifty years. Two of the three, Ansel Adams and Edward Weston, are generally taken to be the doyens of the straight photographic tradition as it developed in California between the two world wars. The third, Wynn Bullock, stands apart because of the nature of his images, although his pictorial means are not dissimilar from those of the other two. This fact—the similarity between Bullock and Adams and Weston—was one of the show's surprises, as was the difference evident in the approaches of Adams and Weston, who are frequently thought of together. In general, the exhibition offered an opportunity for some fascinating reassessments of what now appear as three classical positions in the development of American twentieth-century photography.

Of the three men involved, Adams has achieved the widest popularity and, partly no doubt because of that fact, the deepest skepticism among photographers themselves. That skepticism is partly based on the nature of his images, which tend to be grandiose evocations of the western landscape, and partly on his tendency to dramatic and over-obvious effects, usually involving strong value contrast, backlighting, and other such devices, often souped up by the use of filters and accentuated in printing. There is no doubt that Adams is the most successful twentieth-century practitioner of the nineteenth-century panoramic landscape tradition, coming closest to Muybridge in the breadth of his images. Always at his best photographing nature or found objects, Adams also benefits from printing large, and print size is almost inevitably a factor in the effect of his pictures. Insofar as it relates to the actual size of his photographs, then, grandiosity reinforces the quality of Adams' better images. But insofar as it relates to the subjects of those images, grandiosity is indeed a limiting factor for Adams. The truth of the matter is that his most panoramic images, those for which he has become best known, are not his best, and that those with more limited spatial scope are frequently far superior. Similarly, overemphasized tonal contrast and obvious backlighting, effects associated with his most popular pictures (*Winter Sunrise,* 1944; *Half Dome, Moon,* 1960), are also not generally to Adams' advantage. Faced with the fact that the quality of Adams' work is diluted by the very techniques with which he is most associated, one is pleasantly surprised to find that there is a sig-

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nificant body of work which rises above the threat of slickness (a threat accentuated by the suavity of Adams' printing) to genuine monumentality.

As far as composition is concerned, Adams is at his best observing his subjects at a limited distance (not seeing them in deep perspective) or in detail, letting them run off the page, and anchoring them to the surface either by composing parallel to that surface, by placing an object in the foreground, or by selecting a subject with an all-over pattern (as in *Old Deer,* 1940; *Forest, Castle Rock State Park,* 1962; and *Roots,* 1947, respectively). A combination of limited recession and surface emphasis can work well for him, and many of his most successful views exaggerate the falling off of the land toward the camera, while sealing off distance with trees or other natural objects at the top. This same effect can be fatally mitigated by allowing the upper part of the picture to run to distant mountains and sky (*Mount McKinley,* 1942). To reinforce the strengths of his best all-over images seen in limited depth, Adams is most effective using diffused light. This can be either filtered direct light from a concealed source (*Aspens,* 1958), which tends to distribute light accents throughout the image, or totally neutral light (*Weathered Lucky Strike Sign,* 1971). In both cases, the discrete and palpable quality of three-dimensional objects is reduced in favor of a more unified and yielding effect. Indeed, the greater the sense of objects contained within the picture, the harsher and less good Adams' pictures tend to be. Finally, there is the matter of tonality, at the manipulation of which Adams is a past master. Generally speaking, the greater the range of grays, the better the picture (*Forest into Sun,* 1940). Pictures which have fairly strong value contrasts and which may seem from a distance to depend wholly on those contrasts are often saved by the rich range of binding tones to be discovered on closer examination (*Redwoods, Bull Creek Flat,* 1960). Certain images with a relatively narrow range of values are helped by the variety of inflection within that range (*Merced River, Cliffs,* 1939), while a few with extreme value contrast (the exceptions to the rule) are reinforced by being pushed toward two tones only (*Courthouse, Mariposa,* 1933).

As an example of how good Adams can be, and how little the quality of his work is contained in his most broadcast images (or how much it is contained in the most hidden), one need only consider *Old Hearse* of 1936. An unusual subject for Adams, the composition shows a detail of a horse-drawn hearse observed from below at a sharp upward and diagonal angle. Almost the entire picture is filled with the hearse itself, the little that remains being sealed off and brought forward by the roof against which the forms are seen. Although there are both highlights and deep darks, the picture is largely worked out in a continuously inflected range of dark

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tones, and the light, the source of which is clearly off camera to the right, is gentle and diffused. Finally, one is surprised to discover that continuity and depth of focus are not vital to the picture, doubly so in that Adams is usually associated with extreme focal precision. Not only do *Hearse* and many other photographs lose focus in several places, but loss of focus can be a positive advantage in that it further diffuses tonalities and generalizes images. In sum, there exists from Adams' camera a first-rate body of work conceived in monumental terms, although that work is by no means the work that has brought him the most attention up to this point.

Edward Weston's work contrasts in just about every way imaginable with that of Adams except, perhaps, in the superficial similarity which has for so long associated the two in the popular mind. If Adams is a photographer of nature whose every effort is to capture the scene before him as it is, Weston is the photographer of the contrived, whose efforts seem wholly devoted to making it apparent that photography is art. To say this is to make no qualitative judgment whatever, for Weston may well continue to be seen, as he seems now to be seen, as the greater photographer. Qualitative distinctions between the two men are far less interesting than the stylistic differences between them. Weston's artiness can be seen in his earliest images, the moody *Margarethe* of 1920 for example, and continues through such photographs as the series of nudes in the sand of 1936 to his last work. It is most obviously evidenced in the care with which he composes, in the unexpected aspects he discovers in the most familiar objects, and in the successfully dramatic way in which he lights. Unlike Adams, his photographs are not monumental in scope and, indeed, are often better in smaller formats than in larger (the mid-1930's portraits, for example), but they far exceed their size in scale and are observed with an intensity which invests them with an impact and carrying quality unique to Weston.

Although he sometimes composes well using details of subjects seen close to the picture plane (*Church Door,* 1940), Weston is at his best photographing objects in limited space. His greatest pictures are probably the 1930's nudes and photographs of fruit and vegetables seen in their entirety isolated against a neutral background. Outline and contour are tremendously important for Weston, as is the ability to project the palpability of an object, even though that palpability may be displaced from one associational sphere to another. His nudes, for example, have tremendous presence but it is the presence of an object and not that of a human body, while the presence of his fruit, vegetables and shells is deeply sensual, not to say overtly sexual. This ability to make bodies seem like objects and objects like bodies, while intensifying both the physical presence of the picture's subject and the contradictory context it is made to suggest, is among Weston's supreme achievements and is part and par-

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cel of his artiness. The specificity of Weston's allusions and transformations keeps his work entirely outside the realm of Surrealism, although he must have been deeply touched by Surrealist ideas, and places the burden of quality on the image itself, where it belongs, and not on the apparent subject. It means also that extreme clarity is necessary to Weston's images—uniform detailed focus, objects completely contained within the edges of the picture, and precision of lighting. Although they are often impressive when viewed close-up, Weston's landscapes lose scale by being distant views, and his attempts to compensate by making abstract images of them, particularly in the desert pictures, never wholly succeeds. The means by which he tries to bring out this abstractness, however —extreme contrasts of light and dark tonalities—are the same by which he gives power to his photographs of objects, and the very abstractness he seeks in patterning the landscapes he achieves more successfully in isolating the objects. The rich blacks juxtaposed to flat whites articulate Weston's compositions overall, while his careful lighting gives clear patterns of highlight and shadow that modulate them internally. His work suffers when it runs to silvery tonalities, as in some of the rock and eroded sand photographs, and when too much context—and for Weston any context is too much—is included. Rather than allowing the image to expand, context in Weston's photographs is an irrelevant distraction. Perspective space is almost not an issue, and Weston manages at once to use a monochrome background that seems also to be the picture surface, and to convey the sense of an object seen in all its roundness against that background. In this sense, his accomplishment is not unlike that of Cézanne in painting. Because of the intensity he is able to bring out of his subjects, Weston is extremely successful at portraiture, a genre which escapes Adams almost altogether. The series of small portraits from the mid-1920's is particularly successful, notably those of Carlos Merida and Arnold Schoenberg both of whom stare intently at the camera. In both cases, Weston uses hands to increase the bulk and effect of the portrait and to emphasize personality.

Perhaps the most unexpected aspect of Weston's work in terms of his reputation, and one of the most interesting in terms of the light it throws on the character of the transformations in his images, is the humor revealed in some of the pictures of the mid-1940's. By no means his most successful works, partly because they depend so much on the represented story, these pictures show a wryness that one could not otherwise intuit from Weston's images. The nude in a gas mask (*Civilian Defense*, 1942), for example, pokes fun at the human-object transformations of which the photographer was fond by showing a model whose head has been transformed into an object, while *Exposition of Dynamic Symmetry* of 1943 spoofs the care with which Weston composed. Once seen and understood, this humor adds

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a contextual dimension to the isolated nudes and vegetables that enhances them not as images but as evidence of a creative sensibility. It suggests that the degree of consciousness behind the sexual references of the photographs of peppers and halved artichokes, as well as that behind the object-like nudes, is extreme. The loving playfulness with which these images must have been conceived adds a further dimension to their high seriousness and gives a needed glimpse of Weston the photographer, as Adams' better photographs add a needed glimpse of Adams the photographer behind Adams the man.

Wynn Bullock falls somewhere between Adams and Weston in his pictorial means and outside both as a sensibility. Like Weston, he creates pictures small in size, although Bullock's are also small in scale, pictures that are intensely focussed on the subjects they represent. Like Adams, he is at his best using a graduated range of tonalities and his pictures demand to be entered and wandered through. Like both, he commands tremendous finesse of observation and execution. Like neither, he manipulates and overprints so as to create ambiguous and poetic images that depend for their effect on the associations they attempt to call up. As opposed to Adams' version of nineteenth-century pictorial space, and Weston's of Cubist spatial ambiguity, Bullock's space is almost Abstract Expressionist, his images clinging to the surface at every point, giving way in occasional transparent passages to glimpses of other layers so closely identified with that on top that their exposure can in no way be seen as a revelation of depth. The palimpsest-like surface thus created evokes rather than represents, and is better conveyed by a delicate web of grays than by extreme value contrast. Indeed, contrast does to Bullock's images what it does to Adams', producing a superficiality the vulgarity of which destroys the extreme sensitivity that informs all of Bullock's work. Bullock is at his best working with a diffused light, the source not indicated, which supplies just enough illumination to clarify the presence of form without so much as to emphasize form's physical substance. Occasionally, he can use to good effect Adams' trick of shooting into the light (*The Stark Tree,* 1958), but it is a trick used for mood and not for drama. Unlike Weston, who was able to make one physical object suggest the character of another, Bullock suggests congruences by photographing forms that actually look like one another, seeking faces in the rock, skulls among pebbles, etc. (*Rock,* 1971; *Pebble Beach* #2, 1970). This visual elision brings him much closer to Surrealist practice than Weston and, indeed, his poetic and literary sensibility makes his images often very Surrealist indeed. When Bullock photographs straight, he frequently manages to capture the effects he otherwise produces with darkroom work, as when a woman is seen through a closed and dirty car window (*Woman in Old Car,* 1960), or the photographer himself appears in a Magritte-like reflected image (*Self-portrait,* 1971).

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At times, the apparent poignancy or anguish of the subject matter is contradicted by the beauty of the image (*Woman and Thistle,* 1966), and almost inevitably Bullock's photographs are better when their subjects are hidden rather than fully presented. Thus *Child in Forest* of 1954, one of his most famous photographs, which shows a nude girl face down among forest ferns, is too obvious an image to be completely convincing, while *Old Fence and Fungus* of 1966, an overprinting of several negatives which layers leaves, lichen, and an old picket fence with some barbed wire, has a visual richness that places it among the best of his efforts. As with much precious work, and Bullock makes a virtue of preciousness, there is sometimes a tendency toward mannerism, one that in this case may enhance the anecdote but vitiate the image. In *The Bird* of 1958 and *Boy Fishing* of 1959 the titular subject carries but a small part of the visual burden, and one comes near having to search to find it. In sum, Bullock's is a sensibility curiously apart from that of his generation in California yet sharing its mastery of technique, both in shooting and printing. If he has neither the monumentality of Adams nor the intensity of Weston, he is possessed of a sensibility all his own, one consistently true to itself, and one that enriches and broadens the experience that has been California photography during the last fifty years.

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VERNON YOUNG

Bad Company in Two Languages

OF ONE THING WE MAY BE SURE. Civilisation will find a cure for cancer, for pollution and for poverty. It will *never* find a way to eliminate, to control, or even properly to define, its criminals. The criminal has steadily grown among us, in numbers and in status; we can now look forward to a time when half of society is policing the other half! This being so, we shall have to fall back on the principle that all phenomena not transformed into art are worthless and console ourselves with the blessing that murder, larceny and the manhunt constitute a primary and inexhaustible subject of our fiction and our movies. And with every season that passes it should be increasingly patent that any cineaste who puts his mind on it (except Truffaut) can make a better suspense or crime story than Alfred Hitchcock. Whatever Hitchcock contributed to the genre forty years ago (principally the angles from which the witness point was analytically structured within a sequence), his view of crime has never been any more complicated than that of the frightened fat man. (You notice that it frightened much of the fat off him in those forty years!)[1] The French, *at their best*—for I'm not suggesting they're infallible—take seriously and dissect subtly the moral atmosphere in which crime is a reality; they are especially acute when analyzing the depravity which is likely to ensue in the methods of those whose work is to detect or to prosecute crime. The ambiguity of what constitutes the criminal act, of which side of the law at a given moment is the more inhumane: this has been a theme of many distinguished French films, not all of them nominally crime stories: *Les Enfants du Paradis* (which featured Lacenaire, perhaps the first modern to become a criminal purely on principle: that of intellectual nihilism), *Casque d'Or, Justice est Fait, L'Oeil pour L'Oeil, La Vérité, La Mort du Belle, Armée des Ombres, Un Conde, Juste Avant la Nuit.* Many others. The latest and best in this succession is Edouard Molinaro's *Les Aveux les Plus Doux.* (The title, sardonic, should imply something like Confession is Good for the Soul, but that just won't do in English!) This film resembles the only other Molinaro work I've seen, *La Mort du Belle* (1960, story by Simenon), to the extent that it concerns a police investigator hellbent on destroying the morale of a suspect he has in his grasp. There is no further resemblance, of milieu or style; the earlier film is memorable but not cin-

[1] If I lived to be 150 and wrote criticism for a journal with a half-million circulation, I would never succeed in weaning anyone from his proclivity for Greta Garbo, John Ford, Alfred Hitchcock or the Late Late Bergman.

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ematically impressive. *Les Aveux is* impressive; Molinaro has become a director with first-rate skills; he paces this film—the crescendos and intervals, the intermediate climaxes, the intensive reciprocity of the actors—with a meticulous regard for the script's odd structure: mobile and breathless, with multiple sets, in the opening episodes, closing in to a single setting, virtually a single room, for the last third of the action. (The story is by the novelist Georges Arnaud, who wrote *The Wages of Fear,* but the scenario is a collaboration of Molinaro and Jean-François Hauduroy.) The ground line is established after the fact, you might say: *after* we have witnessed, during a circus performance, a tense, in-the-dark robbery and murder (unpremeditated). Commissioner Muller, a genial-aired fellow, reading *Mein Kampf* in bed, observes cheerfully to his wife that Hitler's success was owing to his conviction that "there are *submissive* nations." "Quite right," he smiles." *I* know that there are *submissive men."* He believes he has found one in Jean Dubreuil, an underworld punk, a weasel, identified by the circus owner and now under arrest, awaiting trial five months off. Dubreuil maintains that he was not involved in the crime, covered with an alibi supplied by his boots-and-mini-skirt female, Catherine.

Borelli, who cuts Muller's meat for him, so to speak, works on the girl, by way of testing her resistance, slapping her around and making a complete shambles of her two-room flat. Since she won't be provoked, Muller takes over, reading the situation correctly and smelling out the sexual attachment of the crumby loving-couple. Assuring Catherine that her Jean is not really a hardened criminal, just a misguided young man, and protesting that he, himself, is not *d'accord* with Borelli's old-fashioned, strong-arm methods, he contrives to get Jean released temporarily, under strong guard of course, and to get the couple married! His argument is that if, when Jean faces trial, he can plead having a wife to support, he will win friends and get himself a much lighter sentence. Dubreuil and his skirt are taken in (even as you and I) by Muller's very convincing clemency, the more so as he plays on their lust for each other, promising them, hush-hush, a "few hours" together, before Jean returns to prison, the long wait and years of celibacy. Then the cat-and-bird game begins.

The discreet "honeymoon" is supposed to take place in a room at a Marseilles court house, put at Muller's disposal with the understanding that no intimidations will be staged there. Leaving the couple alone long enough for them to get sexually worked up, Muller and Borelli then interrupt them, pretend astonishment that they expected more time, demur in the face of their own promises, re-consider, retire—and begin the tease all over again. What Muller really wants is a confession from Jean, or a testimony from Catherine, *and,* as it's further made clear, the *name* of Jean's guilty accomplice,

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still at large. Hence, his pressure-and-release strategy: the time hypothetically allowable to Jean for his emotional gratification becomes an elastic yet dwindling probability; proposals are made, the bait is flashed, then removed to another room; Borelli is empowered to bear down on Dubreuil with crass demands and licentious allusions to the heat beneath the skirt, all for the purpose of invoking Jean's defiance, whereupon, as Borelli moves in to the kill, the beaming Muller comes back into the scene, deploring the youth's ungrateful insolence but restraining Borelli—ostensibly the civil mediator who finds his assistant's method too crude for the occasion. With such assurances, he can usually retrieve Jean's reluctance to cooperate. Since the time for Dubreuil's little orgy with his "wife," made more desirable by the concupiscent sneers of the men, is forever shrinking, the wretched victim signs a full confession, only to discover that before he gets his "fifteen minutes" he is expected to supply the name of his accomplice.

They push him too far; they assume because he's a criminal, he is not human and can be treated like a conditioned rat, that he will break down speedily at the hope of even a brief copulation with his love and the lure of a remitted or at least a reduced sentence. They fail to acknowledge that beyond a point you can't assault the soul of a man, even such a man as Dubreuil, especially not in the presence of his woman; that you can't violate his sexual quick and after hours of draw-and-quarter expect him to exchange his last rag of selfhood—*for what?*—not even freedom, only a *possible* modification of his penalty. Dubreuil discovers an integrity he didn't know he had; he tears up his confession, refuses the fifteen minutes of passion and defiantly tells Muller and Borelli that even if he faces twenty years of prison he is more fortunate than they, if this is the way they daily pass their time! At this expression of sovereign contempt, Muller abandons all pretenses, beats the handcuffed Jean senseless and has him dragged back to jail. But Catherine, left alone in the "nuptial" room, has the last word: she slashes her wrists, thus initiating the downfall of Muller and Borelli, since they will have to explain officially this catastrophic ending to their allegedly liberal experiment.

A diabolical conception (allowances made that the "arrangement" seems improbable!), and the dramatic force of the prolonged inquistion is naturally to the joint credit of Molinaro's expert *montage* and the *tour de force* inflections of Phillipe Noiret (Muller) and Roger Hanin (Borelli). We are, in truth, watching *two* levels of impersonation, since the fiendish character of the Muller plan is precisely signified by its *being* a performance, which deceives us almost as long as it deceives Dubreuil. Bit by bit it dawns on us that the whole session is *histrionic,* that the byplay of Muller and Borelli is a stock but ad lib dialogue; no rehearsal necessary because they've been

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through this before, time out of mind, just this give and take, push and retreat, Borelli taking his cue from Muller, Muller simulating apologies for Borelli's un-gloved temper. *Les Aveux les Plus Doux* is a classic depiction of one of the vilest attainments of civilised man, the Satanic talent—gratuitous, inventive, cynical, unsparing—for mental torture, by comparison with which the lethal sin of the hostage (in this case) seems scarcely more reprehensible.

No such *raffinement de cruauté* enhances the brutalities of Truman Capote's *The Glass House* (made, I believe, for television, but distributed in European cinemas). An old acquaintance in a Western city of the U.S.A. wrote me recently that helicopters fly above the town at night, in order to deter the increased activity of housebreakers and footpads. The citizenry, so protected, have a further complaint: that the helicopter patrol keeps them awake! The nightmare existence this conjures might have been invented by Eugene Zamyatin; since it wasn't, I should be willing to believe *anything* coming my way from American sources. Yet faced with *The Glass House* I am incredulous at the claims made for it as non-fiction and at the assertion of a congressional representative (quoted by the film's distributors) that he finds in this film a "compelling portrayal of what goes on as a *matter of routine, day by day,* in our prisons." Italics mine. I am asked to believe that in any state penitentiary, *as a matter of routine,* a college professor convicted of manslaughter can be assigned to the same cell block as long-term "professionals"; that the entire community of the block can be tyrannized by a homosexual homicidal maniac who runs a narcotics supply line for the prisoners, with the tacit connivance of the prison staff. I am further expected to believe that despite the warnings of an intrepid novice among the guards (unbelievable enough that with his announced views, idealistic, he would have been hired), an informer can be knifed in broad daylight in the prison yard; that the professor, refusing to play ball with Slocum, the boss faggot, can be marked out for murder; that a young newcomer (Alan) who declines Slocum's overtures to sodomy can be seized by muscle-boys and raped in the prison gymnasium; that after he commits suicide as a result of this humiliation no investigation whatever is forthcoming; that in the minor-Elizabethan showdown the Black Power leader (not so named but obviously) supplies the professor with a home-made gun at the saving split-second with which to protect himself from Slocum; that the professor is then shot accidentally by the zealous guard and that when the latter insists on revealing the collusion between staff and prisoners the warden refuses to ratify his exposé, preferring to explain the bloody eruption as a race riot! After which, the guard walks out, to fight the hopeless battle on his own. (But if things were as sinister as we infer from the preceding hostilities, he would have never left that prison unmolested!)

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More dubieties are present than I have listed: summarizing the film thus, I amaze myself; it sounds so stupefyingly preposterous that I wonder why I bother! But hang it all, *it works!*—the movie has tremendous impact. You feel that if it isn't true, all wrapped up like that, any *part* of it could be true. The devilish thing about the art of veracious melodrama is that while you're seeing it, and for some time after, it saps your judgment with a species of aesthetic efficiency. Tom Gries' directing of this film is crisp and bellicose; the dialogue (Tracy Keenan Wynn) has an authentic taste without slavish employment of the available four-letter words; the snow-covered landscape, glimpsed from time to time, is a bleak complement to the "glass house" (Utah State Penitentiary). Above all, the film shows again the single greatest improvement in American films of today: unarguable casting. Billy Dee Williams (the black spokesman), Kristoffer Tabori (Alan) and Clu Galager (the sacrificial guard) are among the conspicuously credible players. Transcending them all, as he should, I suppose, is Vic Morrow as Slocum—another of those larger-than-life "psychos" not infrequent in the American movie. In repose, the actor wears a look of smiling sorrow (like the late Alan Hale); when he goes into his act he freezes the blood. Few men, in life or in the theatre, can express *determination* by walking with their hands in their pockets! Morrow does just that; giving a slight heave to his shoulder as a signal for his henchmen to stay with him, he thrusts his hands into his pockets, which are in front, flanking his privates, steps out with a firm leg and at the same time, *faintly,* sways his rump!—a grotesque alliance of the voluptuous with the merciless. The man is indelible. I couldn't brush him out of my vision for days. How much of the Guignolesque (or should I say Genetique?) content of *The Glass House* I should take on trust I still don't know, but I will say that it's the most claustrophobic prison film I've lived through since Jacques Becker's *The Hole* (in the U.S., *Night Watch*).

However, *Bad Company* is the American film for the purist. Like *Fat City* and *Jeremiah Johnson,* in the vicinity of its excellence, it illustrates half the Aristotelian premise—that *bad* character is sure-as-hell Fate. This is not a common assumption of the American movie; the convention fixes blame for an ill character and ill fortune on the parent, the environment, the "system," an unforeseen contingency, the immorality of success, or demoralization from *not* being a success! In *Bad Company* we are not importuned to see Drew Dixon's escape to the frontier (to avoid conscription in the Civil War) as a circumstance over which he has no control. Drew (Barry Brown) is a God-fearing young man (left-of-center protestant) with a fatal flaw. At the decisive moment he can't resolutely say Yes or No: from this native disability and by all means with the collaboration of his "folks" his misfortunes arise and his personal destiny is prefigured. *If* he had not been faced by conscription, he *might have* concealed the warp

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in his character for the rest of his days: only Mother, or a blind wife, might have known the warp was there. The irony has juice: his Ma fervently connives in his draft-dodging because she doesn't want to lose her boy to the wicked war between the states; she loses him anyway, for once he has evaded military service he has nowhere to go but Out—i.e. to the periphery of settlement; beyond that stretches the almost illimitable West in its last decades, still beckoning the earth-scratcher and the outlaw with equal allure. At this periphery, Drew again has a choice: either to lay low, with the further connivance of a Methodist minister and his wife (Ma and big brother, revisited) or join Jake Rumsey and his juvenile-freak boys, going West—armed. He says Yes to Jake (on the moment's spur, without thinking or weighing) and thereby—given the year, the place, the national situation and his inherited ethos—he seals his doom. Thereafter he tries, pathetically, to follow a double standard. Having joined the criminal fraternity—a quartet of small potatoes more ignorant than vicious and always at the mercy of gun-men quicker on the draw—Drew still thinks he can straddle the line—"this far I'll go along with you, but no further." Impossible. In the interest of self-preservation, to say nothing of loyalty to his bad company, he will have to choose, not once but repeatedly, *against himself,* which is to say against his moral nurture, his maternal commandments, his Sunday-go-to-meetin' ethic. The familiar American hero: self-righteous and intransigent, one hand on the Bible, the other on his gun; keeping himself pure by refusing the bodies of light women but not above stealing—because he's *hungry*—and eventually not above killing, because he's on the run.

Jake is even more radically innocent than Drew: amoral, almost totally irresponsible, an uprooted or never-rooted fallout from God knows what environment, with no theology or even a fragmentary social sense, *except* the redeeming need for fellowship, which he honors until his hair is being singed, then he saves his own scalp first—and, in his primitive way, loaded with charm (the actor is Jeff Bridges, from *Fat City*). Drew and Jake *need each other.* Drew needs Jake's resourcefulness and his lack of conscience; Jake needs the parental shadow that speaks in Drew's voice. He is also not a little awed by Drew's superior vocabulary and his claims to culture. The scene in which Drew, by the light of a campfire on the prairie, reads *Jane Eyre* to his spellbound company, intimidated by Jake to pay attention, is one of the really marvellous things in all American film, probably inspired by the actor in *Huckleberry Finn* reciting Shakespere to Jim and Huck as they ride the Mississippi on a raft! When the film story ends, Jake and Drew are fully fledged badmen for all the time they have left. Like Jean Dubreuil, in a certain sense, Drew's penultimate choice is *not* against himself—not against his new, outlaw self—it is made against society, to save Jake's disreputable life.

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Conceived and directed by the man who wrote *Bonnie and Clyde,* Robert Benton,[2] *Bad Company* also is about malingering innocence, fatally translated by high spirits and diseased will, but whereas Bonnie and Clyde, themselves, were whimsical psychopaths, the young outlaws of *Bad Company* are merely renegades. Jake and his boys are already delinquents, refusing to submit or compete within the legal shape of society. Under normal circumstances, their refusal would simply classify them as tramps, or petty larcenists just outside the law. These are not normal circumstances. Since all but the wee boy, Boog, are deserters from the nation's war, their predicament is desperate: with increasing commitment they are pledged to defend themselves at the point of a gun, from the law or from any rival, equally outlaw, who threatens their "freedom." Space, the expanding space of the prairie and the great beyond, is on their side, for a while; it is also the agency of their destruction. The film is magnificently *composed,* every element unified as if the scenario, the photographic continuity and the piano music had been simultaneously created in a single breath. Benton and Newman's scrip, measured, almost majestic (though majesty is not an ingredient of the story!), makes a revealing statement with every shift of camera, every change of scene. There is no episode which does not advance our understanding of the principal characters or which does not propel the story towards the fatalities which are clearly to be its outcome. The matching-up of shots is perfect; the whole tale seems to take place in a pearly primal dawn of society, like the illustrations in the boys' adventure books we used to read, and every scenic frame had to be the creation of Benton's eye (or that of his photographer, Gordon Willis), since russet prairie-land doesn't do your job for you, the way Zion National Park would. The eye must know where the light will fall, how the shadows will shape, why that tree is preferable to this one, being less obviously compositional. Equally subtle is the movement-plotting. When the boy is shot dead during an attempted raid on a chicken farm, never during the action do you see who is shooting from inside the farmhouse. At one moment a small grubby boy is alive (pathetically, he's the most obscene mouth in the company), the next he's a bundle on the ground to be left behind. The camera holds for a long pause on the lifeless body while we *hope* it won't cut or swivel to show us a glinting eye behind a curtain. Mercifully, it does not.

On the principle that one or two swallows don't make a summer and that in the popular-arts area of America any decent effort is quickly corrupted, duplicated ad nauseam or howled down, I have been reluctant to join wholeheartedly those who have made the most strenuous claims for recent American film-making. The

[2] In between, Benton and Newman wrote *What's Up, Doc;* how this relates I shall probably never find out at first hand, since I am constitutionally allergic to Barbra Streisand. I find Liza Minelli as repulsive, and she can't even sing!

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situation is not uncluttered; for one film like *Jeremiah Johnson* or *Bad Company* there are fifty like *Little-Big Man, Chato's Land, The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid* or *Dirty Little Billy,*[3] in which a driving, full-volume negation is offered as a serious debunking of the Western myth. And critical reactions, most I've read, are baffling. A critic sufficiently discerning to see *Fat City* as one of the Ten Best is likely to be as excited by *Cabaret,* a film for which the unpleasant word, *crap,* is the only just modifier. Still, it costs me nothing to concede that after sixty years of sub-art, mainly, some American moviemakers today are finally, without special pleading or democratic cant, producing films that speak eloquently of the American environment, its contradictions or its desolation. Furthermore, they are distilling from that environment not the pseudo-poetry and sociology of the "silent classics" with their glib symbol-shots of calendars, falling snow and corpulent capitalists, and their gauzy closeups of imbecile actresses, but a vernacular poetry which the director of imagination finds in what James once called "the social scene, shabby and sordid, lost in the scale of space as the quotable line is lost in a dull epic. . . ."

[3] Directed by Stan Dragoti, this is a synthetic product modeled in equal parts on *Bonnie and Clyde* and *McCabe and Mrs. Miller,* and it certainly exploits viciousness for its own sake. *But,* there is much wild poetry in it that can't be dismissed; the photography, even by present standards, is fabulous; the only "love" sequence is a gem of restraint, and Michael Pollard's Billy is the closest thing I've seen to a visualisation of Caliban upon Setebos!

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Reviews

WILLIAM H. PRITCHARD

Understanding Virginia

BY NOW, ANYONE READING THIS REVIEW has surely read a previous one of Quentin Bell's biography.[1] No biography of recent years—perhaps Ellmann's Joyce was the last—has received such universal praise, and deservedly so. It is not only masterfully written, but has provoked others to write well about it—particularly in the case of William Maxwell's excellent piece in the *New Yorker*. About the only ways Quentin Bell has been faulted are that occasionally he compresses too much, in a laudable effort not to be enslaved to just the facts and all the facts; and that he does not do much criticism of Virginia Woolf's writings. Bell modestly claims such criticism is beyond his powers; although that is to be doubted, considering the intelligence of his incidental remarks and judgments about the books, as well as the claustrophobic boredom produced by most literary analysis of those books. But it is true that he tends to defer, wrongly I'm convinced, to what he thinks is a consensus ("If, as many critics assert, *The Waves* was Virginia's masterpiece . . .") rather than attempting himself to effect any displacements or revisions in judgments of her individual works. Nor is there an attempt to assess or make a claim for her achievement as a writer in relation to her contemporaries, or to English literature in its larger aspect. The absence of these attempts doesn't detract from the extreme value of Quentin Bell's book, particularly since it is—unlike other biographies which also eschew criticism—beautifully, sparely shaped, and most courteously aware of its reader. But its publication should be the occasion for reconsideration of Virginia Woolf's importance as a writer, particularly now that we go to the books with new eyes and sympathies made lively by Mr. Bell's splendid creation.

Criticism of those books may be no more dull or piously celebratory than any criticism, but on inspecting books by Blackstone, Guignet, Love, and now James Naremore[2] I'm almost convinced that the

[1] VIRGINIA WOOLF, by *Quentin Bell*. Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $12.50.

[2] THE WORLD WITHOUT A SELF: Virginia Woolf and the Novel, by *James Naremore*. Yale University Press. $8.75. Naremore doesn't call *The Waves* a masterpiece, but, after devoting forty (40) pages of analysis to it, "a failure—though a highly interesting one." He calls Virginia Woolf's prose in this novel "rather stifling in effect—the reader almost drowns in the language." If this is so, why add another forty pages of language to the flood?

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qualities of Virginia Woolf's imagination are such as to make particularly noticeable the dutiful critic's plodding attempts to chart her imaginative footsteps. So everybody tells plots, counts images, fusses with the symbolism and ends up calling *The Waves* a masterpiece, which it may well be if you like mythopoeia rather than a good read from page to page. The depressing prospect of yet another essay on *To the Lighthouse* makes doubly attractive Quentin Bell's preference for impressionistic creation rather than literary criticism:

> Looking for some analogy to the style of her appearance I come nearest to finding it in the art of the Sienese masters of the fourteenth century: in everything she was linear, elegant, dignified, graceful, with very little high renaissance bulk about her, no Raphaelesque sweetness or softness, no corregiescity. In her attitudes there was the oddest mixture of grandeur and clumsiness. Imagine a Simone Martini dismissing the annunciate angel to roll a cigarette or take a hearty four-mile walk over the hills, and you may perceive something of the fine incongruity that I am trying to suggest. . . . she reminded one of some fantastic bird, abruptly throwing up her head and crowing with delighted amusement at some idea, some word, some paradox, that took her fancy.

Whether it's a question of what Virginia Woolf looked like or of what exactly was the nature of her love for Clive Bell or Vita Sackville-West, the biographer never pretends to know more than he tries to tell, never "suggests" more than he can honestly state in the most expressive words available. His morality is delicate, sensitive and strong throughout. In the case of the two people mentioned above, that he can at least mitigate one's (at least this one's) disrespect for Clive Bell and absolute disbelief in the virtues of Ms. Sackville-West, is another mark in his favor. The portrait of Clive Bell is done with particularly superb and vivid lines: that we should say in spite or because of the biographer's being his son would be an insolence of the sort not committed by the son.

Bell is also wonderfully convincing in his presentation of Leonard Woolf, whose painstakingly honest version of himself in his autobiography will not now need to be revised downwards. Without first checking things through with Jill Johnston (who has attempted, in a particularly offensive review in *Village Voice,* to add Virginia Woolf to her ever-burgeoning list of tragic lesbians) it does seem that he demonstrated not only marital fidelity and imaginative sympathy, but also uncommon sense and stubborn devotion to the preservation of them both. And though as we see from *A Writer's Diary* Leonard quarreled with Virginia over her friendships with Vita Sackville-West and, even more strangely, Ethel Smythe, he also

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kept hands off those relationships to the point where they eventually became less exciting to Virginia. The really interesting relationships Virginia Woolf had with other women were with above all her sister Vanessa, then briefly with Katherine Mansfield, and perhaps to some extent with Elizabeth Bowen—relationships where it wasn't clear who was the cleverest woman. But reading about aristocratic Vita and scrappy indomitable Ethel, it's hard to see Virginia's relations with them as much more than an indulgence on her part, patronizing of them (she referred to 71-year-old Ethel as a "giant crab") and flattering to herself as somebody loved or worshipped.

What Bell's biography makes more palpable than did *A Writer's Diary* is the extent to which Virginia Woolf's subjection to powers greater than herself that made for madness isn't something you can avoid for a moment in considering her career. I don't know that others have been particularly struck by her 1923 diary entry (not previously published) about suddenly being overtaken, but it is worth noting:

> And I meant to record for psychological purposes that strange night when I went to meet Leonard and did not meet him. What an intensity of feeling was pressed into those hours! It was a wet windy night; and as I walked back across the field I said Now I am meeting it; Now the old devil has once more got his spine through the waves. (But I cannot recapture really). And such was the strength of my feeling that I became physically rigid. Reality, so I thought, was unveiled. And there was something noble in feeling like this; tragic, not at all petty. Then cold white lights went over the fields; and went out; and I stood under the great trees at Iford waiting for the lights of the bus. And that went by; and I felt lonelier. There was a man with a barrow walking into Lewes, who looked at me. But I could toy with, at least control, all this until suddenly, after the last likely train had come in, I felt it was intolerable to sit about, and must do the final thing, which was to go to London. Off I rode, without much time, against such a wind; and again I had a satisfaction in being matched with powerful things, like wind and dark. I battled, had to walk; got on; drove ahead; dropped the torch; picked it up; and so on again without any lights. Saw men and women walking together; thought you're safe and happy; I'm an outcast; took my ticket; had three minutes to spare, and then, turning the corner of the station stairs, saw Leonard, coming along, bending rather, like a person walking very quick, in his mackintosh. He was rather cold and angry (as perhaps was natural). And then, not to show my feelings, I went aside and did something to my bicycle. . . .

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And they proceed to discuss the day's troubles at the office while Virginia gratefully and painfully comes back to safety and sanity. I quote the entry at length, though not entire, because aside from its fascination as revelation it brings dramatically in focus a major question about Virginia Woolf's writing which this biography raises for really the first time: that is, what is the relation between reading such a passage, then going on, or going back, to Virginia Woolf's fiction? In the case of the above diary entry, Quentin Bell comments on it by saying that the experience caused no ill effects, except or rather that it "had something to do with" her treatment of Septimus Warren-Smith's madness in *Mrs. Dalloway*. Very likely it did. But it might be asked whether, after reading the chilling, brilliantly rendered account of this "short but violent mental tremor," the account of Septimus Warren-Smith feels like much beyond a novelistic contrivance, painstakingly and feelingly done, but relentlessly *literary*, a tour de force people remember from *Mrs. Dalloway*, much easier to contemplate at a safe distance than is the account of waiting for Leonard. In other words, after reading the biography and its new materials, especially those written by Virginia herself, then reading through the *oeuvre*, one comes out feeling she was not a great novelist but a very fine and rewarding and admirable writer. Of genius, if one can bear the term.

So whoever said she *was* a great novelist anyway, somebody replies, or wonders whether distinguishing between novelist and writer isn't tedious and unnecessary. No, not so long as anthologies like the new Oxford Anthology of English Literature have no room for her, nor for Wyndham Lewis—another fine writer who is not a great novelist. We should celebrate Virginia Woolf's achievement as a writer not by tracing symbolic or mythical resonances in the novels, as if they were a constant source of pleasure and knowledge, nor by saluting her as the feminist heroine who preceded Sylvia Plath—artists, though married, who eventually cracked under it all. (Jill Johnston has of course already claimed Sylvia Plath for her lesbian gallery of stars.) So let it be said first of all that as a novelist she had a mind so fine no idea could violate it—whether or not that's cause for admiration. It is certainly astonishing that the daughter of Leslie Stephen who by age 15 had read everything should offer so little intellectual substance in her fiction. The following meditation given to Rachel Vinrace in *The Voyage Out* (1915) virtually marks the beginning and end point of Virginia Woolf's thinking about life, as far as her novels are concerned:

> Who were the people moving in the house—moving things from one place to another? And life, what was that? It was only a light passing over the surface and vanishing, as in time she would vanish though the furniture in the room would remain. Her dissolution became so complete that she could not raise her finger any

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more, and sat perfectly still, listening and looking always at the same spot. It became stranger and stranger. She was overcome with awe that things should exist at all. . . .

From this first novel on to *Between the Acts* (1942) it did indeed become stranger and stranger, but the thinking did not develop or complicate itself. In that sense she should never be confused with Proust, who also knew that life was very strange and whose novels rendered that strangeness with both imagination and analytical rigor. "I see a schoolboy when I think of him/ With face and nose pressed against a sweetshop window" Yeats said of Keats, and there is that schoolgirl side to Virginia Woolf, at any moment ready to be overcome by the wonder of it all. This is not consistently a winning quality, and has to do more work in the novels than it is fit for. Dressed up in mythical trappings, as in *The Waves,* it does not therefore become interesting.

To speak more directly of the novels: *The Voyage Out,* however important it may be as a first presentation of themes that were to preoccupy her in later books, is itself longwinded and callow, a book to whom nobody I think would willingly return. Its successor, *Night and Day,* also takes endless time to get through, and is old-fashioned in its realistic approach to character and scene. But it shows Virginia Woolf coming for the first time to write of London—perhaps the real hero of the book—and is intelligent and sanely attractive throughout. (When she returned in *The Years* to at least the appearance of realism one isn't convinced there has been an advance on the earlier book.) After *Night and Day* comes the "breakthrough" into experimentality and the distinctive Woolf style in *Jacob's Room,* a book whose dubious achievement is not to be about anything so far as I can make out. The next two books—*Mrs. Dalloway* and *To the Lighthouse*—constitute her most successful, most human creations—the only novels she wrote one wants to read more than once. And indeed the first section of *To the Lighthouse* is as technically and humanly accomplished as anything in English fiction: if she had always written thus there would be no question of her stature as a great novelist. But the *Lighthouse* couldn't be done again of course, and after having a lark with *Orlando*—which goes about making its historical and sexual transformations in lively ways, even if your heart may not beat faster at the sight of V. Sackville-West dressed to kill in all those funny outfits—she produced her "masterpiece," *The Waves. The Waves* is, please lower your voice while saying it, a "prose-poem," so we are supposed to understand when characters called "Susan" talk like this:

But who am I, who lean on this gate and watch my setter nose in a circle? I think sometimes (I am not twenty yet) I am not a

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> woman, but the light that falls on this gate, on this ground. I am the seasons, I think sometimes, January, May, November; the mud, the mist, the dawn. I cannot be tossed about, or float gently, or mix with other people.

Not if you're going to think and talk that way, Susan. There are readers who feel this artificial manner works in the service of something deeply interesting; on the other hand, I know almost no one who is ever caught reading *The Waves* and would suspect its fate a proper one for prose-poems. Leonard Woolf told her it was a masterpiece, and the best of her books, but added that the first one hundred pages were extremely difficult and that he was "doubtful how far any common reader will follow." I am that common reader he had in mind. The next ten years until her death brought forth the immensely labored-over *The Years,* which begins bravely and attempts to strike a bargain with realism and London, but grows evermore diffuse and maundering. And *Between the Acts,* which a friend refers to as the poor man's *Four Quartets,* I find just plain silly.

This estimate may sound merely opinionated and ungenerous; the unconvinced reader may read through the novels, as I just have, and make his own judgment. Still it seems too bad to end up with a view of the novels that doesn't differ in essentials from the one Leavis profferred thirty years ago in his *Scrutiny* review just after her death. After reading Quentin Bell we know more, thus forgive more, and perhaps become interested in the novels in ways that aren't mainly evaluative or even critical. Yet Virginia Woolf was often a devastating critic of her own fiction, not only with regard to the early novels but towards, say *Orlando:* ". . . mere child's play. Is there some falsity of method somewhere?" She pronounced *To the Lighthouse* to be "subtler and more human" than *Mrs Dalloway* or *Jacob's Room,* and she neatly touched on, in a letter to Roger Fry, the peculiar quality of her symbolism:

> I meant *nothing* by *The Lighthouse.* One has to have a central line down the middle of the book to hold the design together. I saw that all sort of feelings would accrue to this, but I refused to think them out, & trusted that people would make it the deposit for their own emotions . . . I can't manage Symbolism except in this vague, generalised way. Whether it's right or wrong I don't know; but directly I'm told what a thing means, it becomes hateful to me.

This is not only acute about *To the Lighthouse* but about the absolute necessity of being an active reader; for the air of "vague and hopeless sadness" one critic found in Virginia Woolf's novels is only breathed by a reader who brings into play his own inexpressible

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feelings of sadness at the facts of time, change and death. Unfortunately most discussions of the novels forget that reader by pretending the meanings are all there, clearly worked out and labeled on the page.

When the present flurry of interest in Virginia Woolf—for feminist rather than literary reasons—subsides, she will continue to be read; and the making of adverse judgments about most of the novels may be justified as helping to identify those books that will stay alive. They are, I am convinced, ones in which her critical and satirical spirit, exercised so frequently in her life, was granted some kind of play. E. M. Forster's Rede lecture on her is full of good things, the best of which is his attempt to say how, close as she was to living in the Palace of Art and breathing the thin "aesthetic" air Leavis complains of, she nevertheless avoided confinement in that palace. Forster lays it to something as elusive but important as what he calls her "love of writing"—"writing for fun." The depth of her commitment can be seen from a wonderful remark in the diary where she says that as soon as she finishes writing (this is 1930) she reads Shakespeare *"directly* . . . when my mind is agape and red hot." Then going on to marvel at his speech, his "utmost press of mind," she asks "Why then should anyone else attempt to write? This is not 'writing' at all." Seven years later, when she speaks of the "exhilaration" of reading Congreve's *Love for Love* (also not "writing") you can feel her admiration growing stronger sentence by sentence.

I should say that much of *To the Lighthouse,* part I, reads this way, as if it were not "writing" at all. And there is much fun in this section, along with the portents and the hopeless sadness: just how heroic or mock-heroic is Mr. Ramsay the philosopher, struggling to reach the letter R, like an Alpine explorer, or stomping around reciting Tennyson and Cowper? Concurrently we are engaged by Mrs. Ramsay's memories, her momentary wishes not to have her children grow up, her loving and playful antagonism with her husband. And the great Boeuf en Daube scene, complete with bay leaves and wine and savory pieces, when suddenly August Carmichael begins to chant "Luriana, Lurilee" and makes it sound like the best lyric ever written. And then Mrs. Ramsay's vision of her husband reading, chuckling over Sir Walter Scott's great good sense in the pages of *The Antiquary.* Here is Virginia Woolf, like the Shakespeare and Jane Austen she admired, "consuming all impediments" as her phrase has it. There are moments of this power in *Mrs Dalloway;* there is much of it exhibited in the book from which the phrase about consuming impediments was taken, *A Room of One's Own,* which is both very funny and serious the way Virginia Woolf is at her best. It informs many of the literary essays and reviews, particularly the ones on older writers; Leslie Stephens should have been proud of a

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literary criticism as informed and lively as his daughter's, and as sound as his own. There is most importantly *A Writer's Diary,* now supplemented by the further entries Bell quotes, which remains a constant source of new discoveries, and which like the books just mentioned shows her mind at its richest.

A year or so before her death, having finished Stephen Spender's autobiography she thinks of various people dead or dying, hears the February wind "cut like a scythe," observes that the dining room carpet is turning to mould, still

> thank God I'm not on the North Sea, nor taking off to raid Heligoland. Now I'm going to read Freud. Yes, Stephen gave me three hours of continuous illusion—and if one can get that still, there's a world—what's the quotation?—there's a world outside? No. From Coriolanus?

Yes, from *Coriolanus,* and misquoted interestingly, as she sort of knew. As the bombs fell on England there was really no place to go outside; on March 8, 1941, "fighting despondency" she puts the last entry to *A Writer's Diary:* "Occupation is essential. And now with some pleasure I find that it's seven; and must cook dinner, Haddock and sausage meat. I think it is true that one gains a certain hold on sausage and haddock by writing them down." That is the authentic Virginia Woolf tone and wonderful it is. Three weeks later she walked into the Ouse after writing a note to Leonard which began "Dearest: I feel certain I am going mad" and ended with the following:

> What I want to say is I owe all the happiness of my life to you. You have been entirely patient with me and incredibly good. I want to say that—everybody knows it. If anybody could have saved me it would have been you. Everything has gone from me but the certainty of your goodness. I can't go on spoiling your life any longer.
>
> I don't think two people could have been happier than we have been.
>
> V.

Heart-piercing, reason-bewildering. There was a world elsewhere but in this one she remained a writer to the last sentence.

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MARVIN MUDRICK

Twenty-Three Stone-Deaf Theologians

THERE AREN'T MANY THINGS IN THE WORLD less electrifying than the ten, six, or four latest Shakespeare books.[1] "It is clear," says Ralph Berry with undue confidence,

> that . . . [the situations in *Much Ado*] amount to variants of a single central situation: the problem of knowing. This problem is carefully delineated in *Much Ado*; the metaphysical probings of *Hamlet* are, I believe, nowhere hinted at. The concern of the characters in *Much Ado* is to determine from behavior the feelings and attitudes of the other characters. All other aspects of the problem are excluded.

No Danish pastry, then; nothing but daily bread: "the simple word 'know'—so banal, so profound—" which "in all its forms . . . occurs 84 times in *Much Ado*"; not Who am I? but the basic Shakespearean catechism:

> *Claud.* (or *Oth.* or *Leon.* or *Post.*)
> Who was that lady I seen you in bed with last night?
> *Bora.* (or *Cas.* or *Pol.* or *Iach.*)
> That was no lady, that was your wife.

" 'Know' is the conceptual principle" of *Much Ado About Nothing*. " 'Eye,' " on the other foot, "is easily the main motif in *A Midsummer Night's Dream;* it occurs in that form 20 times and in compounds and plurals a further 48 times": Demetrius and Lysander "are subjectivists who advance their retinal impressions as objective and rational justifications for their conduct." In *The Comedy of Errors,* with its two pairs of twin brothers, "the theme that emerges is the quest for identity." It's rash, though, to conclude that Berry, because he hasn't the ghost of an idea and lacks a way with words, lacks a way with "words": "Words compose the central symbol of *Love's Labour's Lost,*" in which the word " 'word' (and its plural) occurs 48 times." Retinally, words are mere print and seldom mean what

1 SHAKESPEARE'S COMEDIES, by *Ralph Berry*. Princeton University Press. $10.00. SHAKESPEARE'S PASTORAL COMEDY, by *Thomas McFarland*. University of North Carolina Press. $8.95. TRAGIC FORM IN SHAKESPEARE, by *Ruth Nevo*. Princeton University Press. $15.00. SHAKESPEAREAN ROMANCE, by *Howard Felperin*. Princeton University Press. $11.00.

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they say, so that when in *Much Ado* Beatrice commands Benedick to "Kill Claudio,"

> Several points converge in this terse imperative other than the purely theatrical. It is a version of "If you love me, *then* prove it." Moreover, the issue is symbolic. "Kill Claudio" is to kill the Claudio in oneself—to kill the force of distrust. It is to yield to the value of trust, formed on a sufficient appraisal of another, and implicit faith. In a word, it is to love. . . .

In a word, nothing's right or left but daisy-chains of Lower-Bardic imagizing make it so:

> The writing of *The Comedy of Errors* is distinguished by a rigid concentration on the work in hand. It contains at least two major seams that ask to be mined: the ideas of gold-credit-value, and the situation of law infringed. But the iron demands of a comedy solely based on mistaken identity mean that these temptations (as surely they must have been) are suppressed. Those rich seams would have been incompatible with the development of this play. An ironic analysis of mercantile values . . .

and so forth. Ironing out such paronomastic flypaper shouldn't distract us, however, from the deep gloom of Shakespeare's comedies: *The Comedy of Errors* is "pregnant with tragedy"; "The season of death ends . . . [*Love's Labour's Lost*], as the news of death had stilled the Worthies"; in *As You Like It* Rosalind is ominously snippy to poor Phebe; *Twelfth Night* "implies a sour awareness that the real winter is to come."

Even more of a drag than the comic Shakespeare and his saucy transvestites is Thomas McFarland, who opens *Shakespear's Pastoral Comedy* with the proposition that "Every work of art . . . is a consolation for the nothingness of our lives." As if nothingness isn't bad enough, McFarland goes on to assemble some preliminary evidence in behalf of the claims of sexual paranoia:

> The reason for . . . [Leontes'] molten torment may seem, to an industrious and mechanical scholar, sitting comfortably in his study, to be only a matter of dramatic license or Jacobean convention; it will not seem so to those whose misfortune has been actually to experience such agony. For the probabilities in such situations all too often support the fact of guilt. "There have been," says Leontes in recognition of the world's way, ". . . cuckolds ere now;/ And many a man there is, even at this present,/ Now while I speak this, holds his wife by th' arm/ That little thinks she has been sluic'd in's absence,/ And his pond fish'd by his next neighbor, by/ Sir Smile, his neighbor." . . .
>
> Such are the dramatic probabilities, and such too are the probabilities in lived experience. A newspaper report (and perhaps

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> the more ephemeral the document, the more depressingly timeless the statistic) on the day this page is being written, estimates that in America "60 per cent of all husbands and 35 to 40 per cent of all wives cheat on their spouses." . . .

"The most persistent theme in all Shakespeare," says McFarland (correctly), ". . . is that of human faithlessness. It is the very substance of the history plays, the most tormented preoccupation of the tragedies, the chief ingredient of the bitterness in the middle and late comedies, all haunted by the theme of sonnet 92: 'Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not.' Othello's suspicions, like those of Leontes, are in the instance unjustified, but they derive motive power from the high probability of a young wife's betrayal"—i.e., about 35 to 40 per cent. (Yet McFarland quite misses the plain meaning of Shakespeare's most beautiful mad song of sexual anxiety, the Spring song at the end of *Love's Labour's Lost,* and blissfully declares that "The final songs of spring and winter . . . reinforce the mood of mutual happiness.")

For a literary scholar face to face with the nothingness of our lives as well as other high probabilities, one consolation is art, and another is the fast shuffle of index cards:

> Much of human desire is and always has been a longing to animate the inanimate. We need discuss neither anthropological formulations such as Tylor's animism, nor the speculations of philosophers: Strato's hylozoism, Leibniz's monadology, or, with reference to the separation of thought and thing, Sartre's *pour soi* and *en soi,* or Coleridge's persisting question, "what is the difference or distinction between THING AND THOUGHT?" We need not invoke such matters because the realization of the difference between thought and thing, and the desire to animate the inanimate, are part of the fabric of all men's awareness.

True, we need not and should not.

This effect as of a debate among twenty-three stone-deaf theologians pervades the book, in the course of which authorized pronouncements get made about the nature of pastoral, the nature of comedy, the nature of pastoral comedy, and the nature of each of the five pastoral comedies considered (the quality of the pronouncements isn't misrepresented by McFarland's chapter subtitles: "The Playfulness of *Love's Labour's Lost*"; "The Happiness of *A Midsummer-Night's Dream*"). So it's pleasant to add that the Appendix is a fine indignant unauthorized defense of Falstaff, in which, having elaborated an interesting comparison between Falstaff and Socrates, McFarland denies that the rejection scene is "both right and necessary" or even "a required public demonstration":

> Required? By whom? To conform with what moral teaching?

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> Now it may be that a youth should not consort with the likes of Falstaff; but if he does accept such a man, he also accepts the responsibilities of friendship. All human meaning depends upon such a fact. The whole agony of Hamlet testifies to the moral horror of precisely such breaches of human contract, express or implied. . . .
>
> To argue, as do some commentators, both here and in broader contexts, that the moralities of human interaction suggested by Shakespeare's presentations either should be seen as the result of stage conventions, or . . . are enslaved to perversely naïve popular conceptions supposedly dominant at the time, or, still again, can be explained by Shakespeare's inability satisfactorily to transmute his source materials, is, I contend, to reveal fundamental misunderstandings of the nature of his art and its relationship to life. It is subtly to patronize Elizabethan experience; to postulate, in reckless exaggeration, existential differences (as opposed to those of the surface) between our own humanity and that of Shakespeare's time, which, after all, was a mere five or six lifetimes ago. The attitudes crystallized most clearly in the work of Stoll, which have lain so heavily on Shakespeare studies, must be rejected once and for all—in his own books and whenever they appear in the work of his spiritual kindred and progeny. They discount Shakespeare's genius and reduce his humanity. . . .

Still, there are defenses and defenses. McFarland's here reads like a friend's, whereas much of Ruth Nevo's book reads like a closing statement for the accused, now and then even like a signed testimonial:

> The contrast with Brutus' speech could not be greater, and indeed the pair of speeches are a dramatic, as well as a forensic, tour de force. In each case the style is the man, and the projection of personality through contrasted devices of rhetoric is so consummately skillful, demonstrates so unerring a linguistic insight, as to make one yield to a fantasy of regret for the treatise *De Poetica* that Shakespeare never wrote. . . .

If only Shakespeare had written a *book*!

Tragic Form in Shakespeare is long and very busy: strenuously got up, carefully put together, indefatigably argued. Miss Nevo takes the five-act division of the tragedies (she says nothing about the five-act division of the non-tragic plays) to be not a convenience or scaffolding but the very tissue and articulation of each work: "the structure of a Shakespearean tragedy is to be apprehended as an unfolding five-phased sequence, continuous, accumulative, and consummatory, rather than as a simple up-down movement, or even as more complex thesis-antithesis-synthesis." The five phases she calls (1) Predicament, (2) Psychomachia, (3) Peripeteia, (4) Perspectives of Irony and

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Pathos, and (5) Catastrophe; and her explications of the tragedies are designed to prove the conformity of these phases with the corresponding acts of each of the tragedies. Though the peripeteia (reversal of intention) occurs invariably in Act III, the tragic deed itself—what the hero does to make the reversal irreversible—can occur at almost any point in the five-phased sequence, very early as in *Lear* or *Macbeth*, very late as in *Othello* or *Coriolanus*, with corresponding modifications of proportion and effect. For the tragic deed Miss Nevo, with the aim of foiling the newly fashionable Sunday-school Shakespeareans, chooses Aristotle's term, "error":

> . . . it is the passage of character to self-discovery . . ., and not a providential distribution of rewards and penalties, that constitutes the axis of development in Shakespearean tragedy. I place the emphasis therefore upon the act of erroneous choice, rather than, though not necessarily in exclusion of, Pauline sin or Bradleyan flaw, the use of which terms invites a moralistic view of the development of events.

Miss Nevo's structural hypothesis has a bell-like ring to it, it seems to have something to do with Shakespeare's practice, it fends off the Christers, it doesn't get in the way of anything one would like to say about the tragedies; it gives the common reader a blessed respite from image-clusters and concordances; she does use it in each of her chapters to the extent of more or less ritualistically touching all its bases, maybe to make sure they're all still there. But, like most other critical hypotheses about Shakespeare, it's a façade for the same old devotion to Shakespeare's peerless verse and infallible psychological realism, which together are supposed to authenticate everything. For example Miss Nevo, treating *Richard II* as a proto-tragedy, remarks on the "high vein of prophetic patriotism," the "utmost seriousness," the "impressive dignity" of the following passage:

> For that our kingdom's earth should not be soil'd
> With that dear blood which it hath fostered;
> And for our eyes do hate the dire aspect
> Of civil wounds plough'd up with neighbours' sword,
> And for we think the eagle-winged pride
> Of sky-aspiring and ambitious thoughts,
> With rival-hating envy, set on you
> To wake our peace, which in our country's cradle
> Draws the sweet infant breath of gentle sleep. . . .

To the common reader, however, this sort of thing seems the stock in trade of any Elizabethan hack: the galumphing lead-footedness of the verse, the banality of the images, the somnambulistic allotment of a single, usually redundant adjective per noun, the banal and

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redundant hyphenated adjectives. "Shakespeare always speaks for his kings," says Tolstoy, "in one and the same inflated, empty language": the comment is rude but not unfounded; Shakespeare's verse and diction for ceremonial occasions improve with age, but a certain fee-fo-fum persists among the image-clusters. (In *Shakespearean Romance* Howard Felperin observes cautiously that "Public moralizing in Shakespeare is often sententious.")

Miss Nevo enjoys scoring points against T. S. Eliot:

> . . . no character in drama has produced more powerful an impression of spontaneity, of lifelike unpredictability, than Hamlet. T. S. Eliot abandoned the enterprise of interpretation altogether, judged the play "an artistic failure," and diagnosed its cause as Hamlet's "domination by an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear," and this because Shakespeare was under some mysterious "compulsion to attempt to express the inexpressibly horrible." Whatever problems can or cannot be solved by an appeal to a dramatist's entirely hypothetical psychology, it might be observed that "the facts as they appear"—a faithless mother, a murdered father, a usurped inheritance, a venal and hypocritical court society—could provide, for spirits less fastidious than T. S. Eliot's, sufficient grounds for a quite considerable measure of dismay. . . .

But Hamlet the hero of European literature and poltergeist of the Western mind *is* a mystery, he isn't explained by "the facts as they appear," he fathers innumerable mysterious progeny like Clarissa's Lovelace, the Marquis de Sade, Manfred (both Walpole's and Byron's), Pechorin, Eugene Onegin, Heathcliff, Stavrogin, Byron himself, and impresses nearly everybody except the Shakespeareans as the prototypical outcast hero, the man without a context, dominated by "an emotion which is inexpressible, because it is in excess of the facts as they appear," an emotion which can drive him to such an extremity of moral distemper that a man as wise and good as Dr. Johnson is obliged to judge it satanic: "This speech [when Hamlet happens on Claudius praying], in which Hamlet, represented as a virtuous character, is not content with taking blood for blood, but contrives damnation for the man that he would punish, is too horrible to be read or to be uttered [i.e., Eliot's "inexpressibly horrible"]." Or one may give up and settle for Miss Nevo's flippant "commonsense" reliance on the exigencies of the plot: "No delay, no play"; maybe what she sees as Hamlet's "lifelike unpredictability" is only Shakespeare's practical need to keep pushing a dead plot (Tolstoy argues that Hamlet is nothing but a package of mutually conflicting, moment-by-moment theatrical expediencies; that the secret of Hamlet—gigantic cipher—is that he has no character at all). Miss Nevo thinks she's justifying Shakespeare when she says that the delay is "the basic *donnée* of the play"; though of course a *donnée* isn't some-

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thing given, it's something taken, and Shakespeare, anxious to turn out another hit or even another potboiler, is as responsible for the implausibilities as for the opportunities of Belleforest, Kyd, or the *ur-Hamlet*. At any rate, Hamlet has his reasons on the stage, and Shakespeare has his reasons at the boxoffice; but Miss Nevo's quarrel about Hamlet's character isn't with Eliot, it's with Western civilization.

"His mother," says Miss Nevo, "has predisposed him to believe in women's perfidy, has produced in him a revulsion from sex and the stratagems of sex." This bonneted little tyke of a Hamlet recalls another spirit too noble to do some rudimentary thinking about women's perfidy, or to die without a public speech of self-absolution. Miss Nevo bridles at another comment of Eliot's, that Othello in his last speech is "cheering himself up" a "notorious stricture" she condemns for its insensitivity to the technique of "self-dramatization," the very technique which as she believes "accounts for the realism of the great characters of realistic drama." "So-called 'self-dramatization' is the medium of existence of dramatic characters. They enact themselves, they unfold themselves; they have no *other* mode of being of which the dramatic representation is proxy"; and, anyhow, the "words [of Othello's last speech] are, in fact, despite the perplexities they have caused to literal-minded critics, the plain and lambent truth." But Miss Nevo is answering a question Eliot didn't ask: the question has nothing to do with "truth" (verifiability); it has to do with propriety, and perhaps consistency, and possibly the Shakespearean high style as an instrument of pathos. Tolstoy, for instance, contends that Othello's suicide (Shakespeare didn't find it in Cinthio, as Tolstoy points out), "however [theatrically] effective . . . quite destroys the conception of his firm character":

> If he really suffers from grief and remorse then, when intending to kill himself, he would not utter phrases about his own services, about a pearl, about his eyes dropping tears "as fast as the Arabian trees their medicinable gum," and still less could he talk about the way a Turk scolded a Venetian, and how "thus" he punished him for it! So that . . . our conception of his character is constantly infringed by false pathos and by the unnatural speeches he utters.

The old Tolstoy was quite a scold himself, and his angry scolding of Shakespeare is generally ignored as an intercultural embarrassment; but it's at least respectful to pay attention when the supreme master of realistic fiction decides to speak out on the subject of the writer universally considered the supreme master of realistic drama. When Tolstoy says that Iago is "a complete villain, a deceiver, a thief, and avaricious; he robs Roderigo, succeeds in all sorts of impossible designs, and is therefore a quite unreal person"; when, having synopsized the first scene of *Lear*, he says that "the reader

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or spectator cannot believe that a king, however old and stupid, could believe the words of the wicked daughters with whom he had lived all their lives, and not trust his favorite daughter, but curse and banish her; therefore the reader or spectator cannot share the feeling of the persons who take part in this unnatural scene"—when he says such shocking, artless things, we recognize their "truth" (verifiability) before ascending into a cloud of symbols, myths, image-clusters, and basic *données*. Likewise, when Tolstoy names the "false pathos and . . . unnatural speeches" in Shakespeare's ultimate tidying up of Othello, we recognize a pair of truths for which we might prefer friendlier names.

Pathos, genuine or false, isn't restricted to Miss Nevo's fourth-act "Perspectives of Irony and Pathos," it's the typical mood of the Shakespearean catastrophe, whether Othello and Hamlet pleading to be understood, or Lear fumbling with a button, or Cleopatra gorgeously playing the rôle of queenly constancy for the benefit of her awestruck attendants, or Macbeth on the way out like a brave warrior fighting. Miss Nevo thinks of the catastrophe as a moment of tidying up into "self-discovery," when the protagonist, albeit unused to the melting mood, fiddles away at it with swelling orchestral accompaniment to persuade the spectators that he or she isn't a gullible wife-murderer, or a bedeviled teen-age procrastinator, or an ill-tempered old fool, or a mere *femme fatale*, or a self-serving political assassin. The Shakespearean catastrophe does seem to aim at eliding all the imbecilities, miscalculations, and crimes into a conclusion that soars above mere fact; not much self-discovery, but floods of self-admiring tears from the awestruck spectators: What language! O, the pity of it! Iago himself has no power to rob Othello of *that*.

When, on an earlier stage, Creon enters at the end of *Antigone*, another father bearing the body of his dead child, he cries out simply and without evading the fact of his guilt:

> Nothing you say can touch me any more.
> My own blind heart has brought me
> From darkness to final darkness. Here you see
> The father murdering, the murdered son—
> And all my civic wisdom!
> Haimon my son, so young, so young to die,
> I was the fool, not you; and you died for me.[2]

And the very different Creon of *Oedipus Rex*, having listened to self-blinded Oedipus lament the fate of his children, cuts him short: "Enough. You have wept enough. Now go within."

> Oedipus: I must, but it is hard.
> Creon: Time eases all things.

[2] From the translation by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald, in Sophocles, *The Oedipus Cycle*, Harvest Books, New York, p. 235.

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Oedipus: But you must promise—
Creon: Say what you desire.
Oedipus: Send me from Thebes!
Creon: God grant that I may!
Oedipus: But since God hates me . . .
Creon: No, he will grant your wish.
Oedipus: You promise?
Creon: I cannot speak beyond my knowledge.
Oedipus: Then lead me in.
Creon: Come now, and leave your children.
Oedipus: No! Do not take them from me!
Creon: Think no longer
That you are in command here, but rather think
How, when you were, you served your own destruction.

"Exeunt into the house all but the Chorus," whose brief admonitory summary concludes the play.[3] Very few violins here; and Creon's severe, watchful irony helps hold Oedipus back from the flights of Shakespearean self-dramatization that Eliot regards as self-deception. Tolstoy as impropriety and melodrama, but Miss Nevo as the very means of the tragic catastrophe, as indeed identical on the radar screen with the flights of angels that sing those sweet princes all the way to the boneyard.

So it's rather stunning to turn up a critic who may well believe that his own new synthesis can accommodate Eliot, Tolstoy, and Miss Nevo together: the first two are right because Shakespeare's tragic hero is really a romantic hero; and the latter is right because the tragedies are great (if preliminary). Howard Felperin ranges himself among those latitudinarian theologians who grant everything to the skeptic if only the skeptic will grant that even when God nods He's not one darned bit less divine:

> Shakespearean tragedy characteristically places its heroes in situations which require nothing less than a radical transformation of the self. Othello's failure to remake himself is typical of most of the tragic heroes. In his final speech, whether or not he is trying simply to "cheer himself up," he recollects a deed of derring-do from his past to resurrect and validate his conception of himself as a brave and noble hero of romance, a role whose inadequacy at this point is dramatically obvious to everyone except him. One reason critics are tempted to "redeem" Shakespeare's tragic heroes is that most of them try so hard to redeem themselves.

Shakespeare's tragic hero is, in short, as self-deluded at the end as he was at the beginning: "Hamlet, Othello, and Lear are desperate for redemption in their closing speeches . . . to the point of

[3] *Ibid.*, pp. 76-78.

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falsifying their experience to attain some semblance of it"—an ultimate condition which Eliot, Tolstoy, and Miss Nevo would consider disastrously unresolved, but which doesn't bother Felperin at all because it's an index of Shakespeare's capacity for dreaming up another universe even while (or if) he nods. If the tragedies (great, of course) are, without necessary prejudice to their own structure, incipient romances that lack only some arbitrary external redemptive force to turn back the clock and cancel the misery, it's hard to see how Felperin could object to the Nahum Tate *Lear* except, perhaps, on the ground of style. But the problem doesn't occur to him; and, since romance (incorrigible self-deception, stage trickery, implausibility, benignant deities descending from the flies) is transparently a good thing, he insists on admiring anything he can call romantic, till in a gesture worthy of a Unitarian Pope he goes so far as to embrace the New York Public Library: "To the extent that all literary experience involves a journey into another world inherently removed from present time and place, all literature is fundamentally romantic."

Felperin has a habit of admitting the worst in the course of asserting its claim to be the best:

> . . . *The Tempest* is finally intolerant of all attempts to allegorize or idealize experience, whether they be ours or those of the characters within the play. Prospero's scenario is a noble one to be sure, born of the loftiest ideals and aspirations of the Renaissance mind, and if he could successfully stage it, he would no doubt deserve the titles of god and superman, philosopher-king, and ideal Christian prince that critics have bestowed on him. But *The Tempest* is as much about the limitations of the idealizing imagination as it is about its power, and of this Prospero seems to grow increasingly aware. Why, for example, does Prospero persist in referring to his art as a "vanity" and a "rough magic"? Why does he feel that he has to abandon it at all? And finally, just how successful is his art in producing his stated objectives?

And Felperin goes on to include Hamlet himself, with his "self-righteous euphoria characteristic of stage 'revengers,'" among the "histrionic" figures for whom Shakespeare shows "a healthy mistrust." Felperin's own self-righteous euphoria doesn't for a moment entertain the possibility that Prospero's nihilism may be getting out of hand (*The Tempest* is "finally intolerant" all right, and as gloomy as Ralph Berry's amusing reconstructions of the comedies), or that Shakespeare may agree with Horatio in thinking Hamlet as princely a fellow as most of Western civilization has thought since; that in any case both plays are full of shadowy corners unrelated to the overt action.

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As for Posthumus and Leontes, Felperin is more than ready to offer up such fall guys on the altar of Holy William.

> There is more than a touch of Cloten's sexual brutality and Iachimo's dirty-mindedness about Posthumus until both are finally purged by his ordeal of repentance, and in the peculiar logic of romance, his reformation is reflected in that of Iachimo, who has spent a night in Imogen's bedroom and wears her ring. Prospero will also purge by a similar kind of symbolic substitution whatever taint of Calibanism resides in Ferdinand by making him perform Caliban's role of log-bearer. The point is not that the ageing Shakespeare has grown puritanical as is sometimes said, but that love is what binds the universe of romance together and faith is what makes it live, and the romancer who understands the form must come down hard on all perversions of love and betrayals of faith. In *Pericles* these perversions take the form of incest and prostitution; *Cymbeline* and *The Winter's Tale* present that sexual unhealthiness and immaturity which sees only adultery and betrayal in the most unwavering faith.

Doubtless Posthumus and Leontes behave very badly (unless it can be proved that they are motivated by basic *données*); doubtless love and faith, not to mention fatherland and motherhood, ought to be defended if they happen to be attacked; but one would like to know why "the romancer who understands the form must come down hard on all perversions of love and betrayals of faith." When Chaucer writes romances—*The Knight's Tale, The Clerk's Tale, The Franklin's Tale,* even *Troilus and Criseyde*—he doesn't come down hard on perversions or even betrayals; when Mozart and Schikaneder collaborate on the romance-opera *The Magic Flute,* they take love and faith pretty much for granted and deal mainly with the trials and ceremonies of both; and the list of other exceptions to Felperin's First Law of Romance is endless. The question is, then, not why in the romances Shakespeare insists on disapproving of perversions and betrayals, but why he treats them at all; and an answer is implicit in the fact that Shakespeare treats them at length, over and over again, in many of his non-romance plays besides as well as in most of his non-dramatic poems. The answer may be that these are subjects Shakespeare feels driven to treat ("Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not") that something one may fairly call obsession compels him to seek them out and redefine them again and again in situations and images—the sonnets', Othello-Iago's, Angelo-Isabella's, Cressida's, Leontes', Posthumus', Hamlet's, Lear's—of pathological extremity. The point isn't that the ageing Shakespeare grew puritanical: his obsession with what might be going on behind closed doors was lifelong, he nursed it early and carried

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it to the end of the line; and critics who imagine unprecedented philosophical serenity and summits of reconciliation in the romances are taking Prospero's pipe-dreams more seriously than Prospero does.

Critics at work on the romances labor under a special difficulty, because they have to show that the last plays of the supreme dramatist breathe the air of some barely accessible peak or other. Felperin quotes Henry James observing enthusiastically that in *The Tempest* Shakespeare's "human curiosity . . . surrender[s] to the luxury of expertness": i.e., ingenious fable, marvelous verse, very few characters, almost no relationships—whether or not James means this much, a strong case could be made out for it. But Felperin isn't satisfied to found a book on such a case. So about *The Winter's Tale* he swallows hard and says that "No play of Shakespeare's (I venture to say not even *Hamlet* or *Lear*) creates a world of greater amplitude and variety"; and, discussing *Pericles,* he tosses into the fire that dry chestnut the "power and universality" of "the religious drama of the Middle Ages":

> The peculiar power and universality of *Pericles* and the subsequent romances, it seems to me, has less to do with their "conventional" or "mythic" or "archetypal" dimension than with their medieval dimension. Or perhaps the two are finally inseparable and the same, to the extent that the apparent crudeness and naivete of such plays is the condition of their power and universality. Because virtually everything in such plays is subordinated to a didactic purpose: they begin not in the middle of an action but at the beginning and proceed linearly to the end; they frankly announce and reiterate their designs on the audience; and their characters are simplified types rather than complex personalities. They may strike us as technically crude, yet there is an important sense in which they hold the mirror up to nature as faithfully as the most sophisticated of plays, which we mistakenly equate with naturalistic [*sic*].

While waiting for Felperin to explain (he never does) the "important sense" in which the romances do this or that as faithfully as other plays do, thousands of exasperated readers shout that crudeness and naïveté—even taken as a singular noun, even qualified by the weasel-word "apparent"—"isn't" the condition of anything except the crude and naïve; and the half-assed, last-in-the-queue scholars, critics, and commentators who have been lately discovering that the miracle and mystery plays compete with Sophocles and Shakespeare are like the art dealers and collectors who set themselves, everything else having zoomed

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out of reach, to heating up the prices of nineteenth-century American primitives. If Felperin would like to demonstrate that Shakespeare's romances are, as he seems to think, an improvement on the tragedies, he'll have to do better than the ludicrous quasi-anthropological condescension about those quaint Chaucerian peasants out of whose catholic hearts and bowels came the smoking raw stuff of literary greatness. After all, it was Chaucer who wrote *The Miller's Tale;* no ploughman wrote *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight;* and if *Pericles* reclaims the crudeness and naïveté that Chaucer and the Gawain poet were pleased to ignore or parody, then so much the worse for *Pericles.*

The First World Shakespeare Congress was held in Vancouver in August 1971, and a volume of its proceedings has been published[4] Among much boondoggling is an essay by Jill Levenson, titled "What the Silence Said: Still Points in 'King Lear,'" the tone and content of which indicate that Shakespeare's identification with the Almighty is nearly complete. Miss Levenson notes that Cordelia's silence when her father asks the kingdom-splitting question "resonates like the silences of the Bible, fairy-tale and folk ritual, analogous moments that need reflecting upon." (Okay, I'm reflecting. I'm *reflecting!*) More, "A remark by the composer John Cage about silence suggests what we might find in Cordelia's: 'Keeping one's mind/on the emptiness,/on the space/one can see anything can be in it, is, as/a matter of fact, in it.'" Miss Levenson moves on to Abraham's dialogue with God as interpreted by Erich Auerbach, the dismissal from Eden, Noah (of the Ark), Joseph and his brothers, Moses, Jonah and the whale, Job ("The week-long silent reception of Job's calamity speaks for itself"), the Marys, Martha, and Salome; "But"—significantly —"it is Christ himself whose silence resounds most forcefully in each of the gospels." Evidently, this First—Pauline?—Congress is the modest inauguration of a new religion, and by about the Fifth the time will have come for a majority of "delegates" to ratify the Virgin Birth of William the Shakespeare. (It's surely no accident that book clubs already offer *either* the Bible or Shakespeare as gifts to their subscribers.) Elucidating the silence in *Lear,* Miss Levenson takes thirteen pages and sixty-four footnotes: seventy-seven to zero; about the proper ratio between commentary and Holy Writ. When she gets to the words of the play, she may be ready to undertake a new *Patrologia.* Atheists had better keep an eye on Vancouver.

[4] SHAKESPEARE 1971, edited by *Clifford Leech* and *J. M. R. Margeson.* University of Toronto. $10.00.

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J. E. CHAMBERLIN

Poetry Chronicle

THERE IS A KIND OF SYMPATHETIC MAGIC which links the deliberate discoveries of the philosopher or critic with the fortuitous inventions of the poet; its operative rituals are both infuriatingly obtuse and crucially important, and sustain relationships upon which each depends. In *Process and Reality,* A. N. Whitehead once intoned the seemingly most unpoetic proposition that

> the character of an actual entity is finally governed by its datum; whatever be the freedom of feeling arising in the concrescence, there can be no transgression of the limitations of capacity inherent in the datum. The datum both limits and supplies.

It is somewhat stupefying prose, to be sure; but Whitehead, whose work was premised on the existence of ineffable relationships between poetic and philosophic truths, was in fact advancing an idea of central and supremely poetic importance. For poetry relies exclusively upon, and is defined by, its ability to persuade the reader to accept and acknowledge what Pound called its rare and imaginative "SPLENDOUR,/ IT ALL COHERES." This poetic coherence, to which ordinary categories of rational explanation do not readily apply, is dependent upon a subtle complex of necessary and sufficient conditions which Whitehead referred to as a "datum"; and this datum irrevocably determines the character of, and our response to, the "actual entity." Within each such poetic entity (which may be a poem, or a group of poems, or an entire canon, or possibly —and this is more problematic—the literary product of a nation or a language) there is always that extraordinary "freedom of feeling" which constitutes the wonder of art; but it is a freedom which is strictly (and paradoxically) bound by certain conditions which inform the work, by the "limitations of capacity inherent in the datum." Thus, this datum, which effects what Wallace Stevens described as "the transaction between reality and the sensibility of the poet from which poetry springs," can be said to both limit and supply the aesthetic event which occurs when we read the poetry; and it is our (implicit or explicit) acceptance and acknowledgment of this which signals our complicity in that event. It is a form of affectation for either the poet or the reader to "transgress the limitations of capacity inherent in the datum"—it is what Kleist, discussing the

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art of the puppet, called "separating the centre of intention of a movement from the centre of gravity of the movement." And since we are readers of poetry, the poet's puppets, it is well to keep some of these matters in mind; which is why I have cast them in a somewhat exotic mold.

Now the "limitations" of a particular poetic are, in critical terms, most simply and usually provided by some form of teleological explanation, whereby the relationship between genesis, growth and final form of a work of art is predicated upon some concept of purpose, or design, which is fulfilled and realized in a particular way. The aesthetic "laws" upon which such a work relies can then be said to perform a function, the function of realizing the design and purpose of that work of art. On the other hand, that which "supplies" the work, the capacity inherent in the datum, is a form of energy, rather than of design; and this energy, which is the energy of organic and aesthetic process, obeys (according to the alternative critical fiction) immutable rather than functional laws—the laws of nature, rather than the laws of how to mirror nature. It is ultimately a matter of perspective, of course; for the purpose, or evident design, can be seen as supplying the Aristotelian "final cause" of the work of art (though various genetic, or intentional, fallacies lie in wait for the unwary here). And the relationships of the natural or organic process, wherein the actual artistic entity is created "from the beginning" rather than "to some end," in response to particular energies of growth, may easily be considered as an efficient limitation of the final form (though we risk nonsense here). We say that gravity "causes" an apple to fall, yet this limitation of the movement of the apple in space is only one possible fiction; we might as properly say—more properly, if the context is scientific—that there exists a similitude between apples and stars, a convenient relationship which "explains" the proposition just as well, yet is also a hypothetical, or critical, fiction. Perhaps all of this is most clearly enunciated in Aristotle's parable, that the house is there that men may live in it; but it is also there because the builders have laid one stone upon another. And we must not, of course, lose sight of the actual, physical house amidst all this welter of talk.

For Grace Perry,[1] houses and poems are indubitably there for men to live in.

> We have inherited
> the primal
> instinct for preservation
> the search for shelter
> it has always been
> natural

[1] BLACK SWANS AT BERRIMA, by *Grace Perry*. South Head Press. $4.50.

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to exclude the world

She has a Blakean enthusiasm for giving nature the forms of a civilized human intelligence, and (where this is possible, such as in the creating of gardens and cities) for making nature into forms which embody the human—more specifically, the Australian—imagination. For

buildings like poems
are children
attempting new language

In his creations, man proceeds, according to Perry's insistently teleological poetic,

From mind
to motion
to matter—

and the result is a construct which closes the circle of creative activity: the mind no longer seen as a mansion, but as some cabbalistic city hall.

Encased in house
I am a city turning upon myself
a city within a city
within a city
as the ancient mandala
on the temple wall
the outer fire circle
turns the triple spiral
of the first movement in the universe

Unfortunately, sometimes the centre of this creative circle, the linchpin of this poetic bureaucracy, does not hold as well as it might, usually because the grand design, or purpose, is confused or lost, and the prerogatives of the human imagination ignored. We are all rather too familiar with, and frighteningly insensitive to, this sort of degeneration; and indeed town planners and literary critics alike seem able to agree only that

it is difficult to state precisely
at what point
undominated by ordinary laws
new growth becomes autonomous
purposeless progression

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eroding contours and relationships
displaces infiltrates
the familiar

In the pervasive metaphor through which the freedom of poetic feelings in this book is sustained, poetic and physical structures (both tectonic and architectonic) are *almost* consubstantial assertions. The *almost* is bothering, though, and it is on this doubt that the poems in this book waver, as the centre of intention shifts from the centre of gravity. This shift is accentuated by a further assertion:

the poem evolves
line and form
definition emphasis
the words
only the words
reconsider them
adopting or condemning
the outcome is immaterial
to the understanding
that passes judgment

But no one, least of all the poet of these poems, really believes that; and any rhetoric or style which tries to persuade us to such a belief exposes itself to a sharp ridicule.

One alternative is to accept the paradoxes of creative passivity with which Perry flirts, without confining it (as she does) to some ideal aboriginal poet "within whom the spark waits." The archetypes of the western world are informed by such an organic process, in which a shaping purpose or design does not initially inform the unconscious and primordial creative energies, which seek expression as a function of their innate character rather than through some extraneous teleological compulsion. For works of the creative imagination, no less than the forms of the natural world, are never experienced purely as a result; and, for a poet, the literally undetermined origins of creative or organic activity have a seductive charm. Coleridge once remarked that "in every living thing, the conditions of its existence are to be sought for in that which is below it; the grounds of its intelligibility in that which is above it." W. S. Merwin[2] is earnestly concerned with the conditions of creative existence, with the silences before sound, the darkness before light, the unwritten words crouching inside the pencil, and he is accordingly, and quite properly, willing to sacrifice a fair bit of intelligibility.

[2] WRITINGS TO AN UNFINISHED ACCOMPANIMENT, by *W. S. Merwin*. Atheneum. $3.95.

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Trusting in his own Muse (the "Nameless One O Invisible / Untouchable Free"), and that the gift of grace will come "out of chaos . . . and be given," he is sustained by his own practised and negative capability, which never does, but through it all things are done:

hem of the garment
do not wait
until I can love all that I am to know
for maybe that will never be
touch me this time
let me love what I cannot know
as the man born blind may love color
until all that he loves
fills him with color
("To the Rain")

In the creative and unformed world in which Merwin revels, a world "waiting/for the law," our ordinary logic does not, of course, apply:

for in that world nothing can break
so no one believes in the plural there
which is the first abstraction and the last
which is the and which is the between which is the among
so no one believes in us there
so at last there is only
the single
one
alone
held together by nothing
so the question of belief never arises
that is the place of a god
("The Lantern")

The difficulty with such a place, and the poetry of that place, is that we have only negative terms of reference for it. It is a difficulty which Wordsworth described long ago, speaking of the growth of a poet's mind.

Hard task to analyse a soul, in which,
Not only general habits and desires,
But each most obvious and particular thought,
Not in a mystical and idle sense,
But in the words of reason deeply weigh'd,
Hath no beginning.

Merwin's is a long attempt to weigh the words of reason without any

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scales, which is an exercise similar to picking oneself up by one's bootstraps. Sincere to a fault, his sincerity, like Wordsworth's, can be wearisome. Indeed, and inevitably, his insistence on the negatives of whatever state he is describing becomes something of a fetish. He does try to vary the tune by performing various intricate "Exercises" in delimitation, particularly in the poem of that title, in order to reach the point at the origin of creative activity where "everything is continuous again." But, ironically, the forms which these exercises take develop their own rhythms, which eventually contradict the kinds of freedoms of feeling which the poems exist to express, by pre-empting the defining predilections of the creative mind—limiting, rather than supplying. Or rather, supplying a determined design.

If these predilections are urgently felt, a poet may end up by appealing simply to the imagination's always and recognizably limited capacities, the taste and temperament which, like some genetic code, determine his world. It is his own Celtic taste and an elegiac temperament which Seamus Heaney[3] exploits.

> Is there a life before death? That's chalked up
> on a wall downtown. Competence with pain
> coherent miseries, a bite and sup,
> we hug our little destiny again.

Heaney's poems are very lovely, at times agonizingly so, and rely upon the concrete and immediate delights of his language, hedged by the melancholy sensitivities of his mind, in a way that is unusually charming. Early one morning, he tells us,

> I got away out by myself
> On a scurf of winkles and cockles
> And found myself suddenly
> Unable to move without crunching
> Acres of their crisp delicate turrets.
>
> ("Dawn")

The domain of light, when it becomes most clearly a discrete element of existence, provides a thread of fascination through these poems. Actions come to life as aspects of the light which they exact. And the light itself embodies and exacts an imaginative energy which shines forth from some primordial underground as an inner psychic and creative impulse:

[3] WINTERING OUT, by *Seamus Heaney*. Oxford University Press. $4.00.

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Always there would be stories of lights
hovering among bushes or at the foot
of a meadow . . .
Was that the beam
buckling over an eddy or a gleam
of the fabulous? Steady the light
and come to your senses, they're saying good-night.
("Fireside")

Heaney's poems are conditioned by such astonishments: the marvellous Last Mummer

came trammelled
in the taboos of the country
picking a nice way through
the long toils of blood
and feuding.
His tongue went whoring
among the civil tongues,
he had an eye for weather-eyes
at cross-roads and lane ends
and could don manners
at a flutter of curtains.
His straw mask and hutch were fabulous
disappearing beyond the lamplit
slabs of a yard.

And, fine poet that he is, Heaney does not insist upon a special logic for his poems, and therefore does not run the risk of entertaining an indulgent affectation, but speaks simply and clearly with the compelling voice of his own oracular sensibility, from the "lobe and larynx / of the mossy places."

Despite her distressing penchant for one particular phrasing—we encounter fathoms of pain, moments of space, white notes of pleasure, silences of statues, stars of candles, taverns of sorrow, verandahs of dusk, afternoons of adolescence, floods of summer somnolence, penumbras of promises, and chords of light, among other things in her poems—which reflects a somewhat limited metaphorical range, Nancy Cardozo[4] has a genuine lyric talent not unlike Heaney's, and has produced some lovely poems. Especially fine is the sequence of sonnets to her mother, entitled "The Cutting Garden," with its "rituals restored and innocent"; and those poems of "Recognition" which depend upon a recreated, rather than a synthetically remembered, past: a presentation of

[4] HELMET OF THE WIND, by *Nancy Cardozo*. Bobbs-Merrill. $2.95.

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immediate pleasures from the past, rather than a representation of nostalgic moments in an anxious affectation.

For Charles Tomlinson,[5] the formative energies of poetry are predicated upon certain normative conditions, analogous to the continual flux, the movement and motion, of music, memory, and the water on and about which he writes. These conditions are sustained in his poems by a modulating diction which repeatedly "halts (the) progress (of thought), / A clear momentary silhouette, before it / Dips and disappears into wordlessness." For Tomlinson is a connoisseur of incessant transmutations and disappearances, of that "coherent chaos . . . that refuses to declare itself," yet contains a poetic declaration, since "to say / Is to see again by the light of speech / Speechless"; and he admits cheerfully that it is:

> hard to read
> The life lines of erratic water
> Where, at a confluence of two ways
> Refusing to be one without resistance,
> Shoulderings of foam collide, unskein
> The moving calligraphy, before
> It joins again, climbing forward
> Across obstructions: but do you recall
> That still pool—it also fed its stream—
> That we were led to, night by night,
> To return to, as though to clarify ourselves
> Against its depth, its silence? . . .
> 'Written on water,' one might say
> Of each day's flux and lapse,
> But to speak of water is to entertain the image
> Of its seamless momentum once again,
> To hear in its wash and grip on stone
> A music of constancy behind
> The wide promiscuity of acquaintanceship,
> Links of water chiming on one another,
> Water-ways permeating the rock of time.
> ("Movements," VI—"Written on Water")

The poetry of such "illegible depths and lucid passages"

> confers
> as much as it denies:
> we are orphaned and fathered

[5] WRITTEN ON WATER, by *Charles Tomlinson*. Oxford University Press. $4.00 paperback.

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by such solid vacancies.

("On Water")

The "solid vacancies" of Tomlinson's poetry are the particular accomplishment of his supple language, and by employing this language—"the unspoken/ Familiar dialect of habitation—speech/ Behind speech, language that teaches itself/ Under the touch and sight"—to explore "the crossings and the interlacings" of his shifting and mutable, though highly contrived, perceptions, Tomlinson provides us with a compelling "liturgy of changes," celebrated in

an invisible church, a derisible hurt,
A look-out tower, point of powerlessness . . .

("Movements," IV)

This "look-out tower," kin to the tower-mountain of vision of Yeats and Stevens, is appropriately "compounded from pure sound." For there, sound and sight interlace, and through the resulting "consonance between / The pulse of the exploration and the pulse of line" the poet is able to offset, however ambiguously or ironically, such worrying facts as that

the eye
Grasps, at a glance, the mind's own
Food and substance, shape after shape
Emerging where all shapes drown;
For the mind is a hunter of forms:
Finding them wherever it may—in firm
Things or in frail, in vanishings—
It binds itself, in a world that must decay,
To present substance, and the words
Once said, present and substance
Both belie the saying.

("Mistlines")

And Tomlinson relentlessly exploits those obvious ironies and disconcerting ambiguities which follow from this recognition.

Two poems in his book are translations—not, I think, entirely happy ones—of "Mobile Universo di Folate" and "Veneris Venefica Agrestis" by Lucio Piccolo. For Tomlinson's sensibility is curiously unlike Piccolo's, and set beside the translations of

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Brian Swann and Ruth Feldman,[6] his two pieces are rather too strikingly his own, mainly because he is unable to resist chanting his song. Piccolo's liturgy is no less, but quite differently, one of changes, involving a more consciously contrived game, a nervous "search / for a point where space curls up / to be us alone."

> If we are mirror-images
> a breath blows
> without substance or sound
> the world around us
> is not stable either but a fleeting
> painted wall, deceitful game,
> equivocal with shadows and glares,
> and forms that evoke
> and deny a meaning—
> ("Hide and Seek")

Piccolo's game, like Tomlinson's, is endless; though it is also necessary, if we are to play by Piccolo's rules, to recognize that

> the game
> is nothing in itself, only
> it makes us aware of each second
> and tense fibres and hidden diaphragms . . .
> we glide on the edges
> of moving ellipses, airy spirals
> to the dangers that darkness
> shapes
> ("Hide and Seek")

Yet this, and our unease just increases the poet's macabre delight in the flagrant artificiality of his inventions, as he continues cunningly to subvert the fragile definitions which he offers to our suspicious imaginations, suspended "between dream and memory." Piccolo is able to maintain "an atmosphere of indistinct illusion and of moving shadow" by means of what Walter Bagehot, characterizing "ornate art," called "a style of miscellaneous adjunct, a style which shirks, not meets your intellect, a style which, as you are scrutinizing, disappears."

What Piccolo calls every "fold and reflection" of the subject is displayed, and the result is a poetry of delightful verbal fancies. It is a precarious poetic, sometimes compounded of little more than what Coleridge referred to as "a mode of Memory emanci-

[6] COLLECTED POEMS OF LUCIO PICCOLO, translated and edited by *Brian Swann* and *Ruth Feldman*. Princeton University Press. $8.50.

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pated from the order of time and space." But generally Piccolo engages much more of ourselves, and his "sleights of hand confound the soul." It is the poet as conjuror who is the patron saint of this poetry, and he comes, looking somewhat suspiciously like a confidence man, Bosco il Prestigiatore, "But look—he comes, and everyone sees that the hour has not passed, he has held it in his delicate hand, like a gold butterfly, has fixed it, pierced by a pin, to the edge of his frock-coat. . . ."

Robert Bly[7] is a rather differently engaging sort of confidence man, increasingly fascinated by the origins of creative activity. As a result of this enchantment, his latest work is filled with a curious mixture of gratuitous statement and a contrived passiveness. For Bly is not a particularly candid poet; and is not given—and this is his weakness—to exploiting the ironies of his own lack of candour. His exploration of creative relationships and energies is consequently subverted by a very pervasive purpose and design. The gratuitous statement which conceals the design is a tactic, and is premised upon the contrived passiveness (from which the relationships and energies of creative activity emerge), which is a strategy, and which we must nominally accept if we are to read the poems. This strategy is, essentially, a poetic version of Paul Klee's device of "letting a point set itself in motion, or go out for a walk, so to speak, aimlessly for the sake of the walk." In this mode, Bly writes in the second of "Six Winter Privacy Poems" (which begin *Sleepers Joining Hands,* and conclude *Jumping Out of Bed*) of his own work:

> My shack has two rooms; I use one.
> The lamplight falls on my chair and table
> and I fly into one of my own poems—
> I can't tell you where—
> as if I appeared where I am now,
> in a wet field, snow falling.

Bly is intrigued by what Klee calls "the central organ of all space-time motion, call it brain or heart of creation as you will, (which) activates all functions . . . in the womb of nature, in the primal ground of creation, where the secret key to all things lies hidden." Another way of considering this secret key, the "formula of the artistic function," is as the archetype, and particularly the "feminine consciousness" or anima, to which Bly attaches so much importance, in a tradition of which Jung is the most elo-

[7] JUMPING OUT OF BED, by *Robert Bly*. Woodcuts by *Wang Hui-Ming*. Barre Publishers. $3.95. SLEEPERS JOINING HANDS, by *Robert Bly*. Harper and Row. $5.95.

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quent recent spokesman. According to this model, the process of a work of art involves the becoming aware of the archetype, through relationships displayed in the particular prototype. For Bly, a particularly significant prototype is to be found in the time of the troubles exemplified by the Vietnam War ("The Teeth Mother Naked at Last"). More generally, however, it is the poet's wish that the poetic consciousness of man become such that

> the fragments in the unconscious would grow big as the beams
> in hunting lodges,
> then the tiny black eggs the salmon lays in the luminous ears of
> nuns would be visible,
> then we would find holy books in our beds,
> then the *Tao Te Ching* would come running across the field!
> ("Tao Te Ching Running")

Bly relies on the structural power and design of his archetypes quite inexorably, and usually quite intelligently (though at times I feel rather like Tomlinson's Mélisande, whose

> mother sat
> and read to her
> *The Greening of America*
> and other books like that
> and so they lived
> vapidly ever after)—

and he plays various clever games with the relationships that present themselves, games that he obviously wishes to have a runic or rebus-like quality. In Bly's cosmos, moreover, the juxtapositions which the artist discovers are not so far removed from those which the politician employs, nor are their fictions so very unlike.

> It's a desire to take death inside,
> to feel it burning inside, pushing out velvety hairs,
> like a clothes brush in the intestines—
> This is the thrill that leads the President on to lie
> . . .
>
> These lies are only the longing we all feel to die.
> It is the longing for someone to come and take you by the hand
> to where they are all sleeping:
> where the Egyptian pharaohs are asleep, and your own mother,
> and all those disappeared children, who used to go around with
> you in the rings at grade school . . .

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Do not be angry at the President—he is longing to take in his
hand the locks of death hair—
to meet his own children dead, or unborn . . .
He is drifting sideways toward the dusty places

And every now and then the mind snaps.

C. P. Cavafy[8] was a unique and clever poet, whose work is marvelously sardonic and unusually constituted, and well translated by Edmund Keeley and Philip Sherrard. Cavafy's most pervasive design was to interpret historical events as embodying the forces and functional relationships which have produced and still maintain the present. Thus history presents, for Cavafy, a closed organism, each of whose parts, or events, is comprehensible as an aspect of the general whole. In addition, such parts or events are seen as acts, springing from discrete motives, so incorrigibly is this attitude infused with a teleological bias. And Cavafy provides a further refinement, which is a pervasive pessimism that makes his perspective not just anthropological, but what Lévi-Strauss cunningly calls "entropological":

Why this sudden bewilderment, this confusion?
(How serious everyone looks.)
Why are the streets and squares rapidly emptying,
everyone going home so lost in thought?

Because it's night and the barbarians haven't come.
And some people just in from the border say
there are no barbarians any longer.

Now what's going to happen to us without them?
The barbarians were a kind of solution.

("Waiting for the Barbarians")

Cavafy was greatly influenced by Browning and Wilde. His skill with various dramatic forms undoubtedly owes something to Browning; but, more strikingly, he tends to adopt similar terms of reference to those upon which Browning relied. Amidst all its lyric delights, the touchstones of Cavafy's poetry are incorrigibly unlyrical; if the soul is touched, we are rudely reminded of the body's bruises. His language reflects this desperate poetic in its grotesque colloquialisms (though sometimes, I think, the translators make them more grotesque than even Cavafy intended). And the structure of his poems provides for a variety of disturbing juxtapositions and incongruities.

[8] SELECTED POEMS, by *C. P. Cavafy*. Translated by *Edmund Keeley* and *Philip Sherrard*. Princeton University Press. $7.50; $1.75.

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Often, while the rhetoric of a poem effects desire or devotion or sincerity, the context or diction denies it. This can modulate from the moving ironies of "Half an Hour":

> I never had you nor, I suppose,
> will I ever have you. A few words, an approach,
> as in the bar yesterday—nothing more.
> It's sad, I admit. But we who serve Art,
> sometimes with the mind's intensity
> can create pleasure that's almost physical—
> but of course only for a short time.
> That's how in the bar yesterday—
> mercifully helped by alcohol—
> I had half an hour that was totally erotic . . .

to the more cynical, but no less affectionate, account of "Kleitos' illness," and the "old ninny" of a servant who "doesn't realize that the black demon couldn't care less / whether a Christian gets well or not."

The rewards of such a style are, to me at least, rather slight, however momentarily bizarre or delicious its initial appeal. Nonetheless, Cavafy's poetry is of undeniably enduring worth, and the main reason is his sure sense and clear understanding of what Eugene O'Neill called "the lie of the pipe-dream, which is what gives life to the whole misbegotten, mad lot of us, drunk or sober"—and, we might add, pagan or Christian, beggar or king, in defeat or in victory. These sustaining lies are often, in fact, cultural or historical fictions: a sense of being "properly Hellenic," for example. And much of the confidence which Cavafy displays is predicated upon his flaunting of the brazen poetic licence which he exercises, along with all others who seek to advance the truth of masks:

> But through all his distress and agitation
> the poetic idea comes and goes insistently:
> arrogance and intoxication—that's the most likely, of course:
> arrogance and intoxication are what Dareios must have felt.
> ("Dareios")

Peter Porter[9] has two new collections in the current crop of titles, and both are well worth reading. *Preaching to the Converted* is rather like a revival meeting for the inhabitants of

[9] PREACHING TO THE CONVERTED, by *Peter Porter*. Oxford University Press. $4.00 paperback. AFTER MARTIAL, by *Peter Porter*. Oxford University Press. $4.00 paperback.

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Totenreich, where "the final purity is to have nothing to say." In the meantime, however, it is important to keep on talking:

> Extraordinary that victory can be snatched
> From such small things—a shift in
> The weight of nouns, a new nickname
> For God, a flower lasting an extra day—
> We're in a fire, singing; I'm the one
> Whose voice you can't hear; perhaps my round
> O is agony, I shall insist it's praise.
>
> ("In the Giving Vein")

For it is forms which provide the food of the faith which Porter extols:

> Do away with form and you drown
> in the infinite chances, especially
> as darkness and other persons' phlegm
> puts such a strain on you.
>
> ("Tending Towards the Condition")

And Porter is a shrewd and practised manipulator of these forms, a devastating critic of the domains of Merely Magic and Hardly Art, and a prophet who, consoled—and relieved, one suspects—by the fact that "poems / bring nothing about," continues preaching without a worry in the world.

After Martial is Porter's reverent and delightfully anachronistic transformations of some of the more irreverent poems of Martial. It is a marvelous gathering, and Porter deserves much more credit than he modestly claims. He also deserves our thanks, extended to a poet who is undeniably "serious—you don't ask a runner / to try the high jump, and if my trade is words, / I'd be a misfit in the People Show."

For Donald Davie,[10]

> Self-consciousness is not a fault
> In itself. It can be kept
> Other than morbid, under laws
> Of disciplined sensibility, such
> As the seventeenth-century Wit.
> But all such disciplines depend
> On disciplines of social use,
> Now widely lost.
>
> ("Pushkin. A Didactic Poem")

[10] COLLECTED POEMS: 1950-1970, by *Donald Davie.* Oxford University Press. $12.50.

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Shot to hell, apparently. But since he holds that "not by what we want is God defined, / Only by what we lack," Davie feels it reasonable to assume the same for poetry. It is a tricky business, for his definitions therefore depend upon an agreed sense of our shortcomings. And his style must be consonant:

> For such a theme (atrocities) you find
> My style, you say, too neat and self-possessed.
> I ought to show a more disordered mind.
>
> But Wesley's sermons could be methodized
> Accoding to a Ramist paradigm;
> Enthusiasts can never be surprised.
> ("Method. For Ronald Gaskell")

Like those new and fashionable prophets, the "futures research specialists," Davie makes a strenuous attempt "to maintain a surprise-free posture." (Wretched, almost obscene, language: it is not Davie's, but from a publication of the Institute for the Future, Inc.) Unlike them, he retains a sense of his own complicity in all acts of the mind. There are, however, dangers: tedium is one, which he avoids by lampooning the other:

> Theirs are the closed forms, theirs the flat
> Fiat of synopsis that
> Makes every goddess the Great Mother
> And women types of one another,
> And Hathor, Circe, Aphrodite
> One pair of breasts inside one nightie.
> That closed-in Kosmos served by myth
> Is just what Rhyme must quarrel with.
> ("Third Epistle: Six Epistles to Eva Hesse")

Out of this quarrel, Davie fashions his poetry, recognizing the futility of striving after a pure and purely prophetic art, and delighting instead in the imperfections which condition human efforts, perceptions, and existence—and the poetry in and by which they are expressed. While insisting that

> The practise of an art
> is to convert all terms
> into the terms of art.
> By the end of the third stanza
> death is a smell no longer;
> it is a problem of style . . . ("July, 1964")

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he still relies upon a poetic which, surprisingly and rather ironically, affords to the reader none of the consolations of the order which it embodies and in which it obtains, and refuses to be caught "intact in ineffectiveness":

> But I have kept no gardens,
> Am of that vanquished sort,
> The gatherers, the most
> Primitive of woodland cultures;
> I have to offer her
> To whom I most would make
> Offer, no more than nuts,
> Berries, and dubious roots.
>
> ("Sylvae")

For above all else, it would seem, he does not wish to become a

> poet who prizing
> The shape of the truth
> Studies to find some surprising
> Eccentric perception
> To validate memory.
>
> ("Derbyshire Turf")

And this, because he has a true sense that, in the words of Roy Fuller, "a poem must earn the values it intends to subsist by." Davie's is a well-earned poetic, and a fine collection of poems, which contains—for which I am most grateful—a fitting text for this review:

> Teleology, an upright
> Darwinian, gave the Church a fright
> By saying Nature works towards ends;
> 'It is *as if* she did,' contends
> Teleonomy, his cliff—
> Hanging cousin. And 'as if'
> (That smart young cousin knows the score!)
> Gives us the break we'd waited for.
>
> . . .
>
> (For) 'end', as Aristotle saw,
> Implies some things that go before;
> Beginnings, middles . . . and those are
> Inextricably linear.
>
> ("First Epistle: Six Epistles to Eva Hesse")

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VICTOR BROMBERT

The Parliament of Reason

FROM THE FALL OF THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE through the turmoil of the Reformation—Ira Wade's aim is nothing less than to take a disciplined look at those elements that constitute the "conditions of the Renaissance."[1] He hardly neglects a single aspect: the discovery of new lands, the shift in the center of learning, the spread of humanism, all are designated with care. Three capital events are stressed: the rise of individualism, the rise of nationalisms, the emerging modern views on the nature of the Universe. The qualities of the book are visible at a glance. The exposition is always lucid and tight; the summaries are comprehensive. The interaction of the various philosophers and scientists (this "contact" is one of the significant features of the Enlightenment) is brought out with much clarity. The long-range perspective remains steadily before the reader's eye. The book is moreover a superior *état présent,* covering the best of the work done by other Enlightenment specialists. Ira Wade places himself in the finest tradition represented by such masters as Hazard, Lanson, Cassirer. Yet he remains unshakably modest in his tone and conclusions. And, commendably, though his title focuses on the French Englightenment, he tends to view his subject as a European phenomenon.

The lines to be pursued in such a study are multiple and interestingly contradictory. For even if one agrees that the relationship of Reason to Nature stands at the center of preoccupations, this relationship ultimately signifies widely divergent perspectives. To some, it implies the dictates of a natural religion; to others, an unbridgeable gap between the ethics of human understanding and the profound amorality of natural processes. Neither Sade at the end of the eighteenth century, nor Baudelaire in the wake of Romanticism (the former in his obsessive parti-pris of cruelty, the latter in his glorification of artifice and artificiality) can be understood except against the background of an intellectual movement that affirms the prerogatives of constructive scepticism, at the same time as it conceives of scientific activity as a source of power. No intellectual movement has indeed ever been so pregnant with dramatic possibilities. At every stage appear conflicts of the mind. The criteria of conceptual analysis harmonize poorly with the stress on experience and observation. Some of the most fecund ideas of the Enlightenment, while announcing modern forms of democracy, also contain,

[1] THE INTELLECTUAL ORIGINS OF THE FRENCH ENLIGHTENMENT, by *Ira O. Wade.* Princeton University Press. $20.00.

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in germ, notions leading directly to modern forms of totalitarianism. In fact, modernity, as we understand it, has its roots in the eighteenth century—not only in the guise of symptoms (the growing generation gap, the questioning of the source of power, the reverence for *nouvelleté* and the belief that something of the past must constantly be killed), but in the underlying view of criticism as creation, in the dialectical convergence of relativism and necessity.

The timeliness of Professor Wade's study is no less remarkable than the thoroughness of his erudition and the scope of the subject. Yet here also lies the difficulty. Scope and timeliness called for a focussing on problems, even if such a selective and intensive approach meant less comprehensive a survey. Instead, Wade relies strongly on scholarly inventories, balanced expositions, cautious summaries. In the total story-telling, the drama and inner tensions of ideological and psychological conflicts tend to lose their impact. The encyclopedic method blurs the outlines. Issues appear and reappear, but are hardly ever given priority. A more partial, or even partisan, perspective might have been less "honest," but also more provocative.

The substance of this book is extraordinarily rich. Each chapter of each section could lead to a full-length study. After examining some of the theories concerning the Enlightenment (not only recent, but contemporary interpretations such as those by Voltaire and Kant), Wade marshals the prevailing theoreticians of the *origins* of the Enlightenment, and neatly classifies them: Sainte-Beuve, who attributed much of what occurred in the Age of Reason to the often clandestine tradition of free-thinking; Taine, who was primarily concerned with pre-revolutionary ferment; Brunetière, who stressed the Encyclopedic spirit; Lanson, who posed the problem in philosophical terms. Wade next turns to what he calls the challenge of the Renaissance and the response in Renaissance Man. Here Montaigne, whom he knows lovingly, occupies a privileged position. In his distillation of past wisdom, his attempt to merge the act of writing and the act of living, his shift from theology to philosophy, his submission to fact and Nature; in his anti-dogmatic stance and act of doubting, Montaigne announces, and to a large extent determines, much that is to come a century and more after his death. His impact on Descartes and Pascal was enormous. In him, sceptism and the rational organization of the ego achieved high points of refinment. Though Professor Wade has a marked predilection for Montaigne, he does remind us that he was not the only one to have an impact on what was to come. There is the case of Jean Bodin, who asserted that the history of jurisprudence was the master science of man, advocated the gradual modification of customs and laws, and developed a theory on the relation of laws to the nations' character, geographic position and climate. As for Francis Bacon, Pro-

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fessor Wade justly underscores his concern with the plague of poverty, the socialization of knowledge, the classification of sciences leading to Encyclopedism. All are common themes of the Enlightenment.

On baroque thought, and on what he terms the "intellectual response of baroque man," Wade provides even richer developments. For here, religious fervor, anti-religious activity, scepticism, epicureanism, deistic currents, all intertwine. The Catholic reform, galvanized in part by the Council of Trent, represented by figures such as Saint François de Sales, Saint Vincent de Paul, and Cardinal Bérulle, was paralleled by a marked increase in libertinage, implying a significant resistance to piety. But scepticism turned out to be a two-edged weapon: it could be used against free-thinkers. From the very start, rationalism thus carried its own subversive and self-annihilating germs. Some of the most fertile dilemmas of the Enlightenment can be attributed to the ambiguities of constructive scepticism. As for stoicism and epicureanism, they prospered at a time when religious controversy increasingly discredited religion. (What harm the Jesuits and the Jansenists did, not so much to each other, as to the religion they pretended to defend!)

The survey of the history of science, with the expected names of Copernicus, Galen, Harvey, Galileo, et al., does not yield startlingly new results. More interesting for the general reader is the background provided on the "private" academies of Président de Mesmes, Président de Thou, Père Mersenne, and in general on an extra-university intellectual trend leading to an increased gap between theology and the humanistic studies. Professor Wade is particularly helpful in assessing the contribution and respective merits of a group of free-thinkers or libertines: Charron; La Mothe le Vayer, a true Renaissance scholar, fascinated with travel literature; Naudé, librarian of Mazarin, who studied at Padua, whose admiration for all "desniaisés" went hand in hand with his denunication of all forms of fables and impostures (he rejected Providence, and clearly distinguished between the truth(s) of reason and of religion); Guy Patin, for whom religion was apparently but a pretext to fool and tyrannize people; Sorbière, the admiring biographer of Gassendi and early popularizer of England. A group whose true importance it is difficult to assess correctly: their thinking could not afford to be candid or unambiguous. Influenced by Montaigne, combining stoic and epicurean sympathies, they indulged in fideism perhaps only as a form of camouflage, and exploited scepticism as a tool of investigation. One of the merits of Wade's book is to eschew discussing them as a separate sect; instead he shows them in their relation to the chief philosophers and philosophic trends of their time.

Four philosophers of the immediate pre-Enlightenment share

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center stage. The first on Professor Wade's list is Gassendi, reviver of Epicurus and avowed enemy of Aristotelianism: his conviction that thinking really meant "free"-thinking, his attacks on the dogmatism of Cartesian thought, his debate with Descartes on the meaning and use of the word "thought," his concern for the origins of ideas (he influenced Locke), his theory of *volupté*—all serve the broad cause of Humanism in a manner that stresses tradition and history. Descartes comes next in the survey; here, the ground has been well trodden before (the importance of mathematics, the encyclopedic dream of a key to a total science, the vitalism of thought); Wade manages nonetheless to say some important things on Deccartes' poetic dialectic, and on the inner contradiction of his enterprise: the clash between innovation and tradition. Hobbes is treated with somewhat less sympathy, even though his justification of "common" power, his ability to divorce politics from control by religion, his dream of a universal science, can be invoked as determining influences in the development of Enlightenment thought. The position of Pascal is necessarily more paradoxical; but his questioning of the foundations of Christian morality, his focusing on the problem of evil (which truly fascinated the eighteenth century), as well as his relativistic views on the "jeu de forces" (justice, laws, customs), have a great deal to do, sometimes obliquely, with the intellectual climate of the next few generations.

In a later grouping, the book discusses at length, sometimes a bit diffusely, other key philosophic figures: Malebranche, Leibniz, Locke, Newton, Bayle. Here the going is slow. One often loses sight of the central subject: these sections read like textbook expositions in a history of philosophy. All seems placed on the same level of importance. A reader willing to apply his own selectiveness to this abundant material will no doubt come up with suggestions relevant to the question of the formative elements of the Enlightenment: Malebranche's remarks on tradition and "nouveauté"; Leibniz' interest in the history of civilization; Locke's concept of "happiness," belief that the human sciences could be precise, doctrine of the sovereignty of the people; Newton's reliance on observed fact and exact measurements; Pierre Bayle's pioneer work in the history of ideas.

More vigorous are Wade's developments on the important *travel literature* (documentary, fictional, utopistic and propagandistic) which had such an impact on the western imagination and critical thought. This travel fiction, coming in the wake of the navigational discoveries, stressed the motif of nakedness (the emerging concept of the noble savage), and paved the way for relativistic self-criticism, as well as for programs of reform. Rabelais, More, Bacon, Campanella, Cyrano, Fénelon, are but some of the better known names in this connection. What lurks, consciously or unconsciously,

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behind this body of writing, are the themes of society's evil, natural religion, republican equality, possibilities for progress.

The subject of this voluminous study has more than scholarly interest. What brought about the Enlightenment is solidly built into our own cultural reality. To begin with, the problem of "Culture" itself. What is its thrust? Is it represented by the humanist's reverence for the past, by his hoarding of an intellectual capital? Or is it to be expressed by the dynamics of Progress which, inevitably, bring the irreverence of science into clash with humanistic piety? At the core lie, unresolved, the inner contradictions of rationalism. Professor Wade puts this succinctly at the beginning of his book: "Seen in this perspective, the central problem of Enlightenment would be to grasp the way in which rationalism, having set out to become aware of its possibilities, has encountered hidden forces within itself which have made it conscious of its impossibilities" (p. 16). This is that discrediting of reason by reason which is ultimately bound up with the Encyclopedic disease so sharply diagnosed by Flaubert in *Bouvard et Pécuchet* and by Sartre in *La Nausée*. When proliferation of data and inventories of knowledge turn out to be no substitute for the creation of values, when intellectual and moral indigestion sets in, then a culture may also begin to yearn for a counter-culture. The Enlightenment, if Professor Wade's perspective is correct, may have hoped and worked for a fundamental harmony between thought and action. But doubt as to such a harmony was kept very much alive by a darker current of that same period. How else to explain—and no account of the Enlightenment can afford to neglect them—the strident notes of Sade, the oppressive constructs of Piranesi, the aggressive gloom of the Gothic novel?

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DAVID PAUL FUNT

Beyond the Prison-House of Language

SCHIZOPHRENICS, SAYS RONALD LAING, suffer from the Truth. If we observe this statement carefully we see that it has a double emphasis. Schizophrenics suffer from the *Truth;* and, schizophrenics *suffer* from the Truth. That is to say that schizophrenics both know the Truth and suffer from that knowledge. The Truth which the schizophrenic knows and from which he suffers is that all is one, that there is no difference, that difference is an illusion, that it (he) makes no difference. And so, unable to make any difference in his world, unable to create difference, unable to take responsibility for difference, unable to communicate his desire (to make a difference) he lives at the mercy of a chaotic, of a hellish Truth. The wise man, the truly enlightened spirit, the Master, also knows the Truth. He too knows that he makes no difference. But he does not suffer from this Truth, rather he is freed by it, freed to make no difference, freed to ignore, in fact, to obliterate for himself, the differences, logical, anthropological, sociological, psychological, and even philological. He can no longer be bound. Who then makes (a) difference? It is the people like ourselves who live somewhere between schizophrenia and enlightenment and who, firmly installed in the difference (for we so firmly and virtuously believe that it makes a difference, that we make a difference), are often at a loss to distinguish the madman from the Saint and sometimes even find them in one and the same person (as in the Saint Genet of Sartre.) The dialogue of schizophrenics frequently resembles, in its insistently alogical character, in the brilliance of the strategy which is employed to render themselves incomprehensible, nothing so much as a string of koans, koans which are designed, as the Chinese Ch'an Buddhists said, to push the disciple off the ten-thousand foot cliff, to catapult the hearer into enlightenment. "What is my own self," asks the monk? And the Master's reply: "When you have finished your rice go and wash your dishes." Whereupon the monk is said to have been suddenly awakened. Enlightenment comes with the realization that there is no such thing in the world as logical order, or signification, or meaning. And with this comes the freedom of all possible orders and all possible meanings. The disciple is then, like the Master, no longer subject to determination by the language of the other, for his life no longer *has meaning.* He is simply a man, as simply as a tree is a tree.

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Roland Barthes' *Mythologies,*[1] written by him between 1954 and 1956 and here translated, are the unmasking of pieces of bourgeois ideology which Barthes calls myths. Aspects of everyday French life are de-mythified by being considered as sign systems. So, for example, the world of wrestling is seen to exist as a kind of moral drama, the fringed hair and the sweat on the brow which identify the Romans of the movies are seen as the signs by which a certain culture "naturalizes" its own traits, and so too with the sanguinity of wine and the more elaborate mythology involved in the promotion of soaps and detergents. All of these objects are permeated with language which is what allows them to be mythified. Myth, writes Barthes, is a language. And it is precisely that which *goes without saying* that Barthes is out to expose by analyzing the linguistic devices through which the language of interaction with the object itself, what Barthes here designates as transitive language, is hidden, or rather is distorted and disguised in the meta-language which is myth. So that Barthes is concerned in these short pieces not only with the logic of signs but also with the ethics of signs. "Signs," he writes,

> ought to present themselves only in two extreme forms: either openly intellectual and so remote that they are reduced to an algebra, as in the Chinese theatre, where a flag on its own signifies a regiment; or deeply rooted, invented so to speak, on each occasion, revealing an internal, a hidden facet, and indicative of a moment in time, no longer of a concept (as in the art of Stanislavsky, for instance). But the intermediate sign, the fringe of Roman-ness or the sweating of thought, reveals a degraded spectacle, which is equally afraid of simple reality and of total artifice. For although it is a good thing if a spectacle is created to make the world more explicit, it is both reprehensible and deceitful to confuse the sign with what is signified. And it is a duplicity which is peculiar to bourgeois art: between the intellectual and the visceral sign is hypocritically inserted a hybrid, at once elliptical and pretentious, which is pompously christened *"nature."*

The illustration and analysis of this linguistic or semiological deception form the double task of the book. Certain of the brief essays are dated, some are rather peculiar to French life, but all stand as brilliant illustrations of a kind of analysis which gave birth and life to the French Structuralist movement. And while Structuralism has since become more subtle and sophisticated and so massively complex as to be largely the property of specialists, Barthes' long final essay "Myth Today" stands, I believe, as one of the early landmarks of the movement.

[1] MYTHOLOGIES, by *Roland Barthes;* tr. by Annette Lavers. Hill and Wang. $5.95.

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Like Lévi-Strauss, Barthes sees myth as a form. Myth, he says, is not defined by the object of its message but by the way in which it utters this message. The function of myth, whether it be "primitive" or ideological, is to repel contingency, to transform the contingency of history or of induction into essential nature. This it does by establishing conjunctions of signs (words or images) which purport to be essential relations, semiological systems which purport to be natural. Now myth is always constructed from elements of pre-existing sign systems and thrives only on the primary meanings of the terms. But, as Barthes points out, it *naturalizes* them and presents what was a contingent relation of entities as a necessary relation of images. Thus the myth is really an object to be perceived and perhaps to be contemplated or even meditated upon, but it is not, as contemporary ideological myth purports to be, an explanation. This may, in fact, be the main difference between contemporary myth and "primitive" myth, which is found by Lévi-Strauss to have the same formal properties. The difference would lie in the fact that modern myth presents its images as explanations whereas "primitive" myth does not assert itself as explanation but as order, not as causal system but as a logical system. Barthes sees bourgeois society as the privileged field of mythical significations because it is precisely the intention of bourgeois ideology to give natural justification to historical intention and to make contingency appear eternal, thus causing the bourgeoisie itself to appear as the class which exists by nature, the class with no name (for no one calls himself bourgeois), with no origin, with no evolution, with no contingency—hence existing by natural necessity.

While it may be true that the bourgeoisie is the only group that uses myth as a weapon, nevertheless later Structuralist writers have identified the same formal properties everywhere, not only in primitive myth as Lévi-Strauss, but in folklore and even in science, for inductive science always operates within a non-contingent framework, which Michel Foucault calls an *episteme* and Thomas Kuhn a paradigm. Thus Barthes' essay, which was my own introduction to Structuralism years back still, I think, provides one of the best openings onto the field, for rereading it at this late date one is able to find nearly all the themes which are developed in the Structuralist movement.

The central distinction from which French Structuralism began was that made by Ferdinand de Saussure between the synchronic aspect of language (or of any sign system) which he called *langue,* and the diachronic aspect which he called *parole.* The Structuralists have been concerned primarily with the synchronic aspects of signifying systems, with the simultaneously occurring conditions of expression rather than with the temporally extended act of expression itself. Fredric Jameson's book

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The Prison-House of Language[2] draws to a close the high Structuralist period, though of course Structuralism will continue to thrive among academics both in France and in this country. With Jameson's help we may attempt to see what Structuralism has accomplished. The Structuralists, it seems to me, are the modern mystics of reason, presenting us with the concrete results of their own meditations as images of the process of thought—objects for our meditation. What we are presented with ultimately are complex and very elegant hieroglyphical representations of the mystery, as Jameson puts it, of the incarnation of meaning in language. One of the effects of moving from time into space, from diachrony to synchrony, is that the personal ego (or self) disappears, to be replaced simply by the empty place of the subject in the field of phenomena, the place wherein the field is unified and represented. There is, then, at this level of experience, a disappearance of the self as an object (that which desires) existing through time, which is reflected in the Structuralists' insistence on the death of man or of the ego-self—a death which is brought about not so much by destruction as by irrelevance. The self of one who has attained this point floats, as it were, with regard to the phenomena which surround him. This is what is called non-attachment or non-desire. Thus it bears the relation, in linguistic terms, of an ultimate signifier to the totality of that which is signified. This is the effect of taking time in order to make space, whereby the self is no longer caught in a temporal-causal chain, no longer subject to desire, which is a temporal function. Rather he lives in space, in the all-at-onceness of all things. The universe for him becomes a great metaphor, a multiplication of levels all present simultaneously, any or all of which may be sounded at will. So, for example, the Zen Master, sprung perhaps by his koans from the slavery of logical orders, ranges through them at will, or the true psychoanalyst who, taking in simultaneously the variety of levels of meaning implicated in the patient's words or actions, is able to respond, not as the patient demands by his statement, but at that level at which the patient will be forced to encounter himself. Thus the Structuralists' presentation of the images of thought as meditational objects is the intellectual reflection of the non- (or irrelevant) self-in-all-at-onceness. The Structuralists make clear to us at an intellectual level what the Zen Master and the psychoanalyst teach us experientially—that meaning is difference, that it is no-thing, that it is the *No thing* par excellence and that to refuse meaning is therefore a necessary step toward Being. "The absolute 'No' to meaning," wrote Lévi-Strauss in *Tristes Tropiques,*

[2] THE PRISON-HOUSE OF LANGUAGE: A Critical Account of Structuralism and Russian Formalism, by *Fredric Jameson*. Princeton University Press. $9.00.

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is the last of a series of stages which leads from a lesser to a greater meaning. The last step needs, and at the same time validates all those which went before it. In its own way, and on its own level, each of them corresponds to a truth. Between Marxist criticism which sets Man free from his first chains, and Buddhist criticism which completes the liberation, there is neither opposition nor contradiction. (The Marxist teaches that the apparent significance of Man's condition will vanish the moment he agrees to enlarge the object that he has under consideration.) Marxism and Buddhism are doing the same thing, but at different levels.

In retrospect we can see that the Structuralists have, in their own way, retraversed the landscape of modern philosophy from the rejected Cogito of the Existentialists, through the Spinozist monism of thought and being, signifier and signified, indicated in Barthes' early ideal of a pure transitive language and in the work of Louis Althusser; through the Kantianism of Lévi-Strauss and Michel Foucault in which the inevitable and all-pervasive organization of being by thought, of the signified by the signifier, renders the world a distant and rather sadly veiled place, perceived almost as in a vision but escaping always from our grasp; to the Hegelian organization of thought by thought (and so on), that is, the meta-thinking which shows us, as Derrida makes clear, that thought never thrives on being, whether original or ultimate, but only on thought itself, and that wherever we think, whether archeologically or teleologically, whether genetically or instrumentally, we never escape difference. And thus that Presence is not even a distant vision but the fantasy of a child. And so we are returned to the Marxist realization that, if language, signification, is empty at the center, a void to be occupied by him who would deploy that language, then the mystery of the incarnation of meaning in language, of sense in signs, is solved only by the choice to *act* a given system and perhaps to act it in a particular way.

All language is difference, all language is negation. In their almost monstrous multiplication of signs the Structuralists have played the worthy role of the spiritual lion; for the lion, says Nietzsche, is the sacred nay-sayer. Though he cannot create new values, he is necessary for the creation of the freedom for new creation. "The creation of freedom for oneself and a sacred 'No' even to duty—for that, my brothers, the lion is needed." But for a new beginning the spirit must yet become a child. "For the game of creation, my brothers, a sacred 'Yes' is needed: the spirit now wills his own will and he who had been lost to the world now conquers his own world." And so in a world gone mad with meaning the science of language returns us once more to the miracle of speech.

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PATRICK CRUTTWELL AND
FAITH WESTBURG

Fiction Chronicle

He that sits down to compose a Fiction Chronicle (as Dr. Johnson would have put it) believes himself to be making something more than merely a series of reviews of novels. He tries to give to his Chronicle some kind of structure, a theme or themes which will tie it together. But this, one has to admit, may be unfair to the makers of the fictions; for each of them, of course, has written his work with no reference to and no knowledge of the others, and he may well feel that he is being judged by inappropriate and irrelevant criteria. So the chronicler has to be careful that his structure has not been imposed on the works—on the random sample which the chances of the last quarter have dumped in his lap. The individual novels have to come first; the structure has to grow out of them.

That condition observed, there need be no unfairness. For if the "sample" is big enough, and if (a bigger *if,* this one) there really does exist such a thing as "literature" or "fiction," that is, a generic art-form of which each work is an example, then any assortment of such works *ought* to give rise, properly and naturally, to some kind of unifying theme. But the interesting thing about *this* assortment is precisely that it does not suggest any such theme. It seems quite extraordinarily disparate. We have racked our brains to find a structure; we have found none. None positive, that is. The structure we have found is paradoxical. It is the noting of the impossibility of finding one.

For what seems to us to emerge from these works is not exactly the Death of the Novel—that pretentious phrase might be abandoned as meaningless—but the disintegration of it as a coherent genre and, concurrently, the disappearance of the genre's practitioner. What we mean by the genre is a prose narrative of some length, following the time-sequence and practical possibilities of real life and concerned with a convincing evocation of the lives of normal people engaged in activities with which other normal people can manage to identify themselves. (Every single adjective and phrase in the above definition should be heavily loaded with a qualifying "more or less.") And what we mean by the genre's practitioner is that writer who is a dedicated, regular, *professional* producer of such works, turning them out as steadily and un-fussily as Chippendale turned out chairs and sofas and Bach or Handel fugues and oratorios. Of this practitioner the perfect archetype would be Anthony Trollope.

It does seem as if, in the contemporary literary scene, this species is

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going towards extinction. That needs qualifying—two ways. The creatures are still plentiful, but only, now, on a level below the lowest where criticism can operate: wallowing in those warm and affluent swamps where Susann and Robbins and Hailey are the names of might. And the species, on a higher level, hangs on still in England: Murdoch, Powell, Snow, Angus Wilson, are all both reputable and "regular." But in America—there, we suppose, the type-specimen is Mailer. He begins with one book which is a work of true fiction, which creates its own world, realized and objectified. After that—a process of increasing subjectivity and fragmentation, in which a cult of the self, a projection of the writer's personality and career, take the place of real creation. Perhaps he is aware of it, uneasy about it; that might explain those transparent and absurd disguises ("Aquarius" and the rest of them) which keep up an air, a dilution, as it were, of fiction. But whether or not he is aware and uneasy, the process is undeniable.

This, in itself, is no criticism. A writer is entitled to write—indeed, he ought to write—that which he feels he can and must write. And there is nothing inherently superior in the novel-genre as it once was or the kind of writer who became its practitioner. But the fragmentation of the former, and disappearance of the latter, seem to us to have two consequences. Or are they causes? The first—cause or consequence—is that every work of fiction is now an *experiment.* There is no mould, no pattern, pre-existing: each work must be read and understood and judged by its own light and no other. And the second is that this fact puts an enormous premium on sheer genius—and on sheer luck, the fortuitous coincidence of sheer genius with favouring circumstance. It becomes a matter of genius or puerility, supreme success or embarrassing failure. Each work stands on its own; it cannot "lean" on its predecessors. But in the traditional novel of the steady practitioner, each new work can do just that, for the works before have established a mould into which each new one fits: more than that, they have created a world, the unique, identifiable world of that particular creator, and the reader of the new work comes to it knowing already, so to speak, the language it is written in. For such writing, supreme genius and total success are not needed *all* the time. For much of the time, commonsense, integrity, knowledge of the world, will do well enough. Of such writers, the clearest exemplar, again, is Trollope. We, as it happens, think that he *was* a genius: the point is that he didn't always *have* to be.

And so—we have found no structure. Instead of which, we can present only some groupings. And the first of these will be the Latin American. There are a number of Latin American works here; and of these one should perhaps take first Borges' *Universal History of Infamy,* both for chronological reasons (it was first published in 1935) and because it in particular, and certainly the author in gen-

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eral, have been enormously influential on Latin American literature over the last three decades.[1] That is not, to tell the truth, something one could possibly have deduced from this book by itself. It consists of a number of sketches ("stories" is not quite the word) of the activities of dubious characters, some real, some fabulous, some half-and-half, which Borges has extracted from sources ranging from the *Encyclopedia Britannica* to Mark Twain, and which he treats with that peculiar tone of obliqueness, literary polish, ironic detachment, which was to be his characteristic mode. Many of the sources are from the English-speaking world, another thing which was to remain prominent in his work; and that, perhaps, may partly explain both why this *was* influential and why it can hardly make much impact on us some forty years later. For presumably that material was a good deal more exotic and glamorous for a Spanish-speaking public than it would be now, in the days of the global village; but when it comes back to us, re-translated into its native tongue, it has inevitably lost its freshness.

Still, one can guess at what the influence was, in at least two of the other Latin Americans. It appears, with results not too successful, as we think, in Trevisan's *Vampire of Curitiba*. This book, like Borges', consists of what the jacket, correctly, calls "narratives and sketches"; it's said by the translator to be an example of a Latin American literary movement which goes under the label of "magic realism." Both words of the label (if this is a fair specimen) must have rather specialized meanings. The "magic," perhaps, is to be found in the fact that the events narrated seem to move from the realm of the factual to that of fantasy, with a no-man's-land between; the "realism" may reside in the sketches' alternations between violent action and monotonous *non*-action. In the group of sketches which gives the title to the whole volume, a characterless young man called Nelsinho passes glumly through a series of sexual encounters ("adventures" would *not* be the *mot juste*), which are, even to him, dull and ugly and more or less unwanted. The message, we assume, is that that is what "reality" is like. Well, maybe it is—to poor Nelsinho: but to make, for the benefit of others, a conveyable positive out of such negation calls for something Flaubertian, a *Bovary* genius which Trevisan is hardly in command of.

But Casares' *Diary of the War of the Pigs* seems much more successful; "magic realism" would do very well for it. Its theme—to over-simplify—is the pain and problem of growing old. This is ex-

[1] A UNIVERSAL HISTORY OF INFAMY, by *Jorge Luis Borges;* tr. by *Norman Thomas di Giovanni*. E. P. Dutton. $6.95. TRIPLE CROSS, novellas by *Carlos Fuentes, José Donoso,* and *Severo Sarduy*. E. P. Dutton. $8.95. THE VAMPIRE OF CURITIBA, by *Dalton Trevisan;* tr. by *Gregory Rabassa*. Alfred A. Knopf. $7.95. FAMILY TIES, by *Clarice Lispector;* tr. by *Giovanni Pontiero*. U. of Texas Press. $5.75. DIARY OF THE WAR OF THE PIG, by *Adolf Bioy Casares;* tr. by *Gregory Woodruff* and *Donald A. Yates*. McGraw-Hill. $5.95.

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pressed through a group of aging men, with one, Vidal, at the centre, who live in a city in which, as we gradually become aware, groups of young men are waging a campaign of terrorism against the old. This terrorism Casares keeps very effectively in the background: no *Clockwork Orange* exhibitionism of blood and horror, only the thud of bombs in the distance and Vidal's awareness, now and then, that one of his friends has disappeared. The true drama, of which the terrorists' acts are a sort of symbol (though one which, like all effective symbols, is only reality pushed one stage further, the reality of our generation-obsessed age-fearing society)—the true drama lies in Vidal's ever-increasing sensitiveness, his awareness of the isolation of old age, his striving to accept the humiliations it entails. All this we found convincing and moving. Where the story seems to falter is in its delineation of a belated love-affair which, one gathers, was to save Vidal from utter despair—and in its dubious ending, which seems to leave everything ambiguous: did Vidal stay with his love? did the young men call off their "war of the pigs"? And if they did, why? But even if the ending is unsatisfying, the work as a whole has real imagination, intense but controlled.

Is it characteristic of the Latin American avant garde that they deal in sketches and short stories and novellas? If this selection is representative, they do: for *Triple Cross* is made up of three novellas by different authors, and *Family Ties* is a collection of short stories. Of the former—at least of the first two novellas included in it—one has to say at once that Kraft-Ebbing has not lived in vain. "Varieties of Aberrant Sexuality" we have here in good measure, and splendidly aberrant at that. In the first novella (by Carlos Fuentes), a homosexual youth adores his mother, an aging movie star, but she, alas, takes her son's boy-friend for *her* lover. In the second (by José Donoso) we have a middle-aged transvestite—for quite a time we think "it" is a woman, until suddenly the pronoun changes and we realise just *where* (if that's the right conjunction) we are—and this transvestite has a virgin daughter of eighteen who earns an honest livelihood running a whorehouse in rural Mexico. Ah well! such things do happen, we doubt not, down Mexico way: but if they are to yield instructive amusement to Anglo-saxons of narrower experience, one thing, above all, is needed—and that is a sense of humour, just one small gleam of awareness that such goings-on *might* be regarded as comic. And both these authors are far too dependent on the great shades of Joyce and Faulkner; one "tracks them in their snow" all the time, with that kind of undigested derivativeness which is utterly destructive of a personal vision. As for the third of these novellas, which is by Severo Sarduy, this is certainly a curiosity, but a curiosity by which, we have to confess, we found ourselves baffled. It *appears* to be a blend of drug-induced fantasies and moral allegory. The "characters" are called Help, Mercy and Mortal; they undergo a dizzying series of transformations

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and transfigurations; and it is not surprising that at the end the author supplies a "Note" explaining what has been happening. It was needed. But it didn't really *help*. . . .

Clarice Lispector's stories in *Family Ties* deserve the kind of respect which is always due to seriousness and sincerity. We get the impression (helped, perhaps, by the translator's introduction, which invokes the names of Sartre and Camus and other existentialist father-figures) that Lispector is rather a philosopher writing fiction than a fictionist *pur sang*. There is plenty of good writing here—there is, in particular, a sharp eye for detail and a clear style to render it—but all the characters, somehow, seem to be the *same;* their motivation seems more important than their individualities; we have the feeling that a metaphysical structure has preceded, and inhibited, spontaneous creativeness.

Our next group may be called the Fables. We mean by that label fictions which do keep some contact with what (if we are not metaphysicians) we call reality and normality, but which convey their pictures of them through a story in itself mythic or fantastic. Of these we have five.[2] Two of these Fables are concerned with contemporary America, one with an evocation of America some twenty-five years ago, and two with an exotic past. We shall take them in that order.

Jerzy Kosinski's *The Devil Tree* is a fable about that "problem" which perhaps exists more in the minds of sociologists and professional agonizers than in the experience of most of us middle-class, middle-income creatures—the problem of excessive and unearned affluence. Young Jonathan Whalen is super-affluent. He has inherited no less than twenty-five billion dollars. As a predictable consequence (predictable, that is, within the conventions of this "problem"), he has become super-alienated. He goes through the routine —drugs, sex, violence—but of course it is all meaningless. His affluence has insulated him from experience, and denied him the capacity for feeling. It is obvious from the deliberate exaggeration of Kosinski's fable that he is mocking it; he himself is aware that the "problem" of having too much money is not a problem to be taken seriously. Fair enough: but in that case what is his book really *about?* If it were a serious satirical study of our old friend the American Dream gone sour—hard-working parents making their pile by exercising the Puritan virtues, children rejecting those virtues and irretrievably corrupted by that pile—well, that *would* be a real subject, though one might doubt if anything new could be made out of it nowadays: but can one make effective satire out of something proclaimed by oneself to be unreal?

[2] THE DEVIL TREE, by *Jerzy Kosinski.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $6.95. PICTURES OF THE JOURNEY BACK, by *Jack Matthews.* Harcourt Brace Jovanovich. $5.95. THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD, by *Fielding Dawson.* Black Sparrow. $2.00. A WOMAN NAMED SOLITUDE, by *André Schwarz-Bart;* tr. by *Ralph Manheim.* Atheneum. $5.95. JUDAH THE PIOUS, *Francine Prose.* Atheneum. $6.95.

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Also about contemporary America is Jack Matthews' *Pictures of the Journey Back.* The fable of this one is a journey across Kansas (the wind-howling horror of which state is vividly evoked, according to one of us, who knows it) by a rodeo cowboy, a hippie girl, and an avant-garde film-maker boy, the purpose of their journey being to visit the girl's mother, who has been for years the cowboy's mistress and is now dying of cancer. Cowboy and girl and, at the end, dying mother all come to life with great vividness; Matthews has an admirable ear for the way people talk, and it is largely through their dialogue that these three are alive. The problem with the book is that part of it which is "fable"—character and role of the film-maker. For he has something more to do than simply be another person on the journey. As they travel, he imagines their journey as a subject for a film; their progress is interrupted by extracts from his notebook, seeing it all in cinematic terms. Here, we two chroniclers were somewhat divided. One of us felt that all this was parody; the other, that perhaps, through the film-maker and his meditations, Matthews was saying something about the relationship between raw experience and art. Certainly, the film-maker is given the last word: it is he who says what seems to lay claim to an *understanding* of the "journey." But however one takes it, this is a book with its own vision, off-beat but authentic.

The piece of American nostalgia is Fielding Dawson's *The Greatest Story Ever Told.* This, which is only a short story (69 pages in small-page paperback), is a vivid evocation of adolescence in suburban St. Louis some twenty-five years ago. Its method is to cross-cut descriptions of the narrator's sexual initiation with passages about his experience of baseball; and just to show you how authentic it all is, it gives you a picture of the author, *c.* 1946, wearing saddle-shoes, "catching for Grace Church (Episcopal)." And very charming, too. He looks like a thoroughly nice, clean boy, closer to Tom Sawyer than to 1973. Of course, it's lightweight; of course it comes near to being sentimental. But it does ring true. And the sex-baseball interplay makes its point—even to that one of the chroniclers whose knowledge of the game is limited to awareness that some things are done in it which are indisputably Not Cricket.

On to the exotic fables: and first, to André Schwartz-Bart's *A Woman Named Solitude.* The first part of this describes a tribal society in West Africa and its life before the West and the slavers acting for the West descended on it. This evocation is deliberately dreamy, rhythmical, ritualistic, idealised. Commonsense might object that the real life of such a society had doubtless more of the qualities attributed to it by Hobbes—"nasty, poor, brutish and short." But the idealisation has a point here: it puts in relief the appalling difference between a society which was at least natural, organic and complete, and the totally anti-natural, disintegrated society of slavery. This is conveyed through the woman of the title; she is the half-

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white daughter of an African woman taken as a slave to Guadeloupe in the French West Indies. (The time is the early nineteenth century—Revolution and Napoleonic wars.) Under the agony and humiliation of slavery, she steadily degenerates to something like an animal. But not quite: she keeps some shreds of courage and independence, after her death (she is executed after leading a hopeless revolt) she becomes a myth on the island, and the last sentence of the book links her myth with that of the martyred Jews of the Warsaw ghetto. This, it would seem, was certainly the book's intention—to give something of a timeless and mythic quality to an episode of stark horror and beastliness and to suggest that all such episodes have a common quality. We were not quite sure if the intention succeeded. Translation may perhaps have damaged it; for a work like this, a work on the uneasy border between prose and poetry, is desperately dependent on verbal tone.

Last of the fables is Francine Prose's *Judah the Pious.* This appears to be a sophisticated pastiche of the tales of Jewish folklore. Its story, fantastic and picaresque, is supposed to be told by a wise old Jewish "mountebank" to a boy-king of Poland, at a time when the Jews are in some danger of a pogrom. The tone—*faux-naif,* more or less—is kept up very successfully through a prose of studied elegance: but we did feel that it was kept up too long for comfort. This is in the genre of the moral tale, the genre of *Candide* and *Rasselas,* and such moral tales should be brief. And we couldn't decide what the "moral" of this one was. That the "telling of stories," the exercise of fancy and imagination, is a way of, as it were, making sense out of pogroms? Maybe: in which case *Judah the Pious* has a certain remote kinship with *A Woman Named Solitude.* But the latter does have a quality of memorable evocativeness: *Judah the Pious,* against it, seems dim, self-conscious, contrived.

Our last group may be called the Traditional: works which, on the whole, keep within that definition of the novel we attempted at the outset. Of these we have four.[3]

One doesn't need to read more than a page or two of Elizabeth Spencer's *The Snare* to know that this *is* a novel by a real professional. Its theme is the deliberate abandonment by a young, upper-class, New Orleans girl of the protected security of her environment and her exploration of the "other world," the world of danger but also (she feels) vitality, the world of violence, drugs, black magic and jazz. She doesn't, it seems, want to reject her own world entirely; she wants rather to be able to possess both worlds and thereby to "live" completely. She is innocent, determined, naive but not stupid—a convincing creation, for whom one feels the blend of pity, admiration,

[3] THE SNARE, by *Elizabeth Spencer.* McGraw-Hill. $7.95. APOSTLES OF LIGHT, by *Ellen Douglas.* Houghton Mifflin. $6.95. BALCONY OF EUROPE, by *Aidan Higgins.* Delacorte. $8.95. BRIDES OF PRICE, by *Dan Davin.* Coward, McCann & Geoghegan. $6.95.

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exasperation and anxiety which one would certainly feel for someone like her in real life. She is by no means the only convincing character in the book; it abounds with them. (And what a relief!—credible people in a credible world!) Where we felt that the novel was not so sure of itself was its evocation of the dangerous world that Julia explores. That seemed uncertain, fuzzy at the edges, as if built up from secondary sources. (The Manson trial seemed to lie behind part of it.) Was it meant to be incurably evil—or no worse than excitingly unbalanced? Was Julia destroyed by "the snare"—or does she escape it? Perhaps Elizabeth Spencer is more at home with her usual form, the novella; for in that form ambiguities may be suggested (think of *Heart of Darkness*), they do not have to be resolved.

Ellen Douglas's *Apostles of Light* is concerned, like the *Diary of the War of the Pigs*, with the anguish of growing old. (Their treatments are in radical contrast: that, fabulistic; this, realistic.) At the centre of this novel are two old people, a man and a woman, retired schoolteacher and retired doctor, who have loved each other for years, and who find themselves, suddenly, trapped by the onset of senility and in a thoroughly dreadful old people's home. The love of these two is movingly conveyed; the mixture of concern, exasperation and guilt with which the schoolteacher's family confront the problem of what to do with her, is totally convincing. But a third element is brought in, a group of utterly cruel and callous people, whose one interest is to make a profit out of the home, at whatever cost in suffering and humiliation to its inmates. In a sense, this brings a "propagandist" element into the novel; it becomes, in part, an "exposure" of such people and such institutions. Of course they exist; of course they deserve to be exposed; there is a well-established tradition of the novel as vehicle for such exposures. But perhaps Ellen Douglas might have taken a hint from the great master of such fictional exposures. Dickens does not allow his work-house in *Oliver Twist* or boys' school in *Nicholas Nickleby* to occupy too large a proportion of the novels they occur in. They are savagely, unforgettably created and demolished, and then—the novel moves on. Ellen Douglas's old people's home is the centre of the novel almost throughout, and a consequence of this seems to be the intrusion of a quality of almost-melodrama (the ending especially), and this swings the attention from the true tragedy, the internal and personal, which would have been no less tragic if everyone had been kind and understanding.

Aidan Higgins' *Balcony of Europe* ought not, perhaps, to be included among the Traditionals, since the story is far from clear and straightforward. There is a welter of detail whose interconnections are obscure; actual events and dream events are juxtaposed; characters appear and disappear, and leave no trace behind them. It is a novel of first-person narrative; and we could not help re-

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membering what Henry James had to say of that form in the preface to *The Ambassadors;* "The first person, in the long piece, is a form foredoomed to looseness." Perhaps, in this example of it, the "foredoomed looseness" was intensified by the remarkably cosmopolitan nature of the cast. For the narrator, who is Irish, is living in Spain with his wife, who is Scottish, and he has an affair with the wife (Polish-Jewish) of a writer from America (Oklahoma and California). According to the blurb, "the themes of adultery and loss are reflected in the lives of the two lovers and, on a larger scale, the Jew's fate in this century." Well, that, perhaps, was what the book intended: we have to report that for us it did not succeed.

And we come at last to Dan Davin and his *Brides of Price.* Perhaps our tastes are unadventurous, perhaps they are conservative; but on the whole we found this novel, which is certainly the most "comfortable," the most easily comprehensible, of the lot, to be also the most satisfactory. It, too, is a first-person narrative; H.J. would doubtless accuse it also of looseness: but the difference is that here the looseness, being combined with clarity and self-awareness, seems the easy looseness of life. The narrator is an Oxford academic, an anthropologist. His professional problems—can he write his book, and is it any good? should he or should he not accept the Chair which is offered him?—are woven in and out of his personal ones. He is a slightly passive person; things (and women) *happen* to him, and he lets them happen; they work themselves out, eventually, and he lets them do so. He is intelligent, sceptical, low-keyed in the best Oxonian style, and Davin has found for him a prose which exactly reflects him, a prose pellucid and invisible. No amorous gymnastics, narrated blow by blow and grunt by grunt; not a symbol to be seen from first page to last. If we are not careful, we shall say it's like Trollope.

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Letter to the Editor

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The Directory costs $4.00 (including postage and handling) and is published by Poets and Writers Inc., with support from The Literature Program of The National Endowment for the Arts. Please prepay by check or money order to *Poets & Writers Inc.*

—GALEN WILLIAMS, Director

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Report

Letter from England

THE DAFFODILS ARE BEGINNING TO BLOOM outside my window and the country is on the verge of chaos. A normal enough situation, in fact. Nothing will stop the daffodils from coming up in their complacent fashion one March after another; nature is profoundly reactionary or, to use an indispensable New Leftish word, *ideological* in its blind attachment to the status quo. Meantime there is chaos in industry; chaos breaks out quite frequently, two or three times a year, and the writers of newspaper headlines would be lost without the word. The current round of chaos is caused by strikes or other kinds of industrial action on the railways, in gas supplies, and in hospitals. Not good, certainly, but as chaoses go I've known worse, like last year in the miners' strike, when electricity supplies were heavily reduced. Meantime the cracks get deeper in the liberal consensus. Muggings have increased in London and the IRA have exploded bombs in the streets of the capital. Inflation rages, and the Government is at last trying to do something about it, after two years of right-wing laissez-faire policies and letting the market sort itself out. In 1970 the Conservatives argued that prices and income control would never work and were not worth trying; now, however, they have brought in a highly *dirigiste* scheme and are in bitter conflict with the unions. Hence the latest round of chaos. As the Conservative party edges towards the centre, the Labour party is moving sharply left, in a way that is no doubt satisfying for those who believe in real socialism, but is certain to lose them votes from the uncommitted. Both major parties are unpopular with the electorate, and Liberals and representatives of other minor groups having been doing remarkably well at parliamentary bye-elections. But my money is now on the Conservatives to win the next general election. I can't see them getting my vote, but I doubt if the Labour party will either. Harold Wilson now looks a totally discredited politician in the eyes of most people I know. There are still very able and attractive people in the Labour Party, pro-Europeans and supporters of moderate policies like Roy Jenkins and Shirley Williams, but at the present time they are imprisoned and out-manoeuvred by the militant left.

It may be a good thing that the division between the parties has sharpened and that politics is about real ideological issues. Certainly there are many, both on the right and the left, who believe in polarity and sharp divisions of opinion. It makes for greater drama on the political scene, certainly, but the ultimate end of polarity and the abandonment of consensus is civil war, or at least the situation

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that currently prevails in Northern Ireland, where those who have strong views prefer shooting their opponents to talking to them.

Perhaps, taking a long view, we have been here before, and consensus is a bit of a myth, or at least something that comes and goes. In some respects the current industrial troubles are far less savage than those that raged seventy or eighty years ago when the trade union movement was in its infancy. One Victorian labour leader, I believe, prayed in public for the death of an oppressive aristocratic employer. It would certainly add to the piquancy of the political scene if a trade union leader or Labour politician were to be seen praying on television for the death of Mr. Heath. But this would probably be regarded as very bad taste, the current permissiveness of the media not extending quite so far. How far the media—and particularly television—are responsible for polarization, in their incessant search for dramatic confrontations, is a question worth discussing. In 1910 a policeman's helmet knocked off in a scuffle at a picket line might have been given an inch or two of type in the press. Now, with luck, every television viewer in the country can see it being knocked off in a moment of instant drama. (Not to mention the further possibility that the obtrusive and exciting presence of the television cameras may have been the cause of the scuffle in the first place.)

There is also the consideration that nowadays industry is more centralized and urban life more massified, and that the public as consumers and users of service industries tend to suffer more in the current disputes, as compared with old-style slogging matches between workers and employers. The hundreds of thousands of people, perhaps millions, who travel to work on the London commuter trains are peculiarly at risk when there are strikes or go-slows on the railways. Their travelling conditions are, at the best of times, miserable, probably less good than would be permitted for the transportation of animals. Once chaos breaks out, and they have no certain means of getting to work or getting home again, their natural irritability turns into uncontrolled fury. Railwaymen have been beaten up and injured, and to add insult to injury, they were men from the wrong union, the ones who are working normally. Clearly, it is hard to be discriminating under such conditions.

Once, about twenty years ago, I was a London commuter and I still regard myself as fortunate to have escaped from that particular treadmill. In other ways, though, the early fifties look like a golden age from these troubled times. Undoubtedly it was an age of consensus, of bi-partisan politics, when all the deep divisive questions seemed to have been settled. In Britain, as much as in America, people talked of an "end of ideology." There was the arrival of a certain modest prosperity after the privations of wartime and the immediate postwar years, social differences were less marked than they

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are now, extreme poverty seemed to have been eradicated, inflation was so slight as to be unnoticeable, strikes were rare, no-one got mugged on the streets of London, and there were no real or simulated acts of sexual intercourse on stage or screen. Clearly, one's memory of a golden age is specious; the calm of those years was unhealthily bland, and as much the product of the exhaustion of wartime as of any really earned tranquility of spirit. At that time television was still far from universal and had not yet established its irrestible power to dramatize every aspect of life. If poverty had not in fact been eradicated, it was easier to ignore, whereas now one's peace of mind is constantly jolted by television documentaries about the plight of the homeless in London and other large cities. The fact of suffering is always before one, whereas in the fifties one ignored it or pretended it wasn't there; a famous article in the *Spectator* in 1954 said that the new young writers of that time "were not much interested in suffering." Again, the fifties were an insular time, when one wasn't very interested in what went on abroad; understandably enough, at that time, since Englishmen had been quite sufficiently and bloodily involved in what went on abroad between 1939 and 1945 to last them a long time. The Suez adventure of 1956 was a sudden shocking reassertion of British interest in "Abroad," which was regarded, rightly, by liberals and intellectuals as a monstrously regressive act, though many ordinary people, never averse to bashing the wogs, thoroughly approved of it as a reassertion of imperial impulses and a sign that there was life in the old Lion yet. But for those of us who were growing up then and trying to write, Suez marked the emphatic end of a phase; the re-entry of history into private life and the shattering of political consensus. At the same time, the Russians occupied Budapest and lots of poems were written in England about that event, mostly not very good but deeply felt. This was the year after Kingsley Amis had published a notorious statement to the effect that no-one wanted any more poems about foreign cities.

For anyone of my generation, whose childhood was spent during the Second World War and whose entry into adult life coincided with the early fifties, those years will continue to have a peculiar attraction. Life was reviving after the long winter of the forties, and the writers then emerging suggested new ways of understanding one's personal and social experience. Not to be sure a political or ideological understanding, as is now demanded, but hints, in the early novels of John Wain and Kingsley Amis, of farcical or energetic ways of getting the bastards off one's back without rocking the boat too much. And new intellectual styles were indicated by the crisp, formal, academic poetry of the young poets who were still at, or not long out of, Oxford or Cambridge, and who were generically dubbed the Movement. It was mostly thin, elaborate contrivance, I sup-

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pose, heavily influenced by William Empson or Robert Graves, but it seemed exciting at the time, and I wrote a number of poetic exercises in that manner which remain undisturbed in the little magazines of those days. I still have a certain taste for that kind of poetry, even though after twenty years most of it looks irretrievably dated. As, indeed, does much of the fiction, which now seems content to mark up small triumphs over small difficulties. Of the writers who emerged from that milieu, Kingsley Amis seems to me to have established an impressive *oeuvre* of fiction, uneven in all sorts of ways yet offering at its best a happy combination of serious intent and comic achievement. Among the poets, Thom Gunn remains important even though his later development has been as, essentially, an American poet, long resident in California. Of those who have retained specifically English identity, the two finest are Philip Larkin and Donald Davie. I referred a couple of years ago in one of these letters to Larkin, repeating the current impression of him as a depressed but sharp-eyed observer of the texture of English social life. I now think this impression needs modifying; some of Larkin's recent uncollected poetry has been metaphysical rather than social in its emphases, and critics have been taking another look at Larkin's earlier poetry, seeing in it aspects that are much more symbolist than anyone realized ten or fifteen years ago, and finding deeper and more complex feelings than depression or resentment.

Donald Davie began in the early fifties as what he himself once self-deprecatingly called "a pasticheur of late-Augustan modes." Those early poems were good but limited, being formal, witty and aloof. Thereafter, as his recently published *Collected Poems* reveal, he moved through a variety of styles and influences: Pound, Williams and the Black Mountain, and, most abidingly, Pasternak, whose "Zhivago" poems Davie once translated.

Yet whatever stylistic variations Davie moves through, he returns time and again to certain recurring themes; his own origins as a nonconformist Yorkshireman, and his preoccupation with England as a poetic subject. A few years ago Davie went into a deliberate self-exile as a professor at Stanford; he seems to have done so in order to undergo expatriation as a conscious experience, to see England in a new perspective. Davie's poetry is usually rewarding and is sometimes very beautiful, though a certain bias towards the cryptic and the oblique and the mannered can make him hard to tune into. Leaving the precise qualities of the poetry to one side, we are faced, I believe, with a strange but interesting literary personality. Davie inclines towards the large gesture and the aristocratic style of the great Modernists—Yeats, Pound, Pasternak—whilst being constantly aware of his own modest origins and cultural formation: provincial nonconformity, the local grammar school, Cambridge. This tension between the way he wants to feel, and the ways in which it is possible

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for an English academic of his generation to feel, gives a peculiar tension to his poetry. He is honest enough and empirical enough to refrain from myth-making, or again, perhaps he feels that the mythopoeic mode is unavailable to him. Yet Davie is an emphatically right-wing poet, who tolerates but does not particularly like social democracy and small-scale English decency. This division is perhaps easier to live with in Californian exile than in England itself, and Davie, taking the full strain of it, has turned it into excellent poetry.

He is also one of our finest living critics; his *Articulate Energy* of 1955 contains implications for the understanding of poetry that are still not fully realized. Recently Davie published a short book, *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry,* which is far more personal and argumentative than its title might suggest. Just as his earlier book on Ezra Pound developed a running argument with Pound, so in this new book Davie sustains a quarrel with the ghost of Hardy, whose influence he sees as far more prevalent in British poetry over the last forty years than anyone realizes. Davie resists Hardy as an embodiment of all the lesser English decencies: irony, empiricism, goodheartedness, stoicism, rational pessimism. Yet in the end Davie has to concede a kind of victory to Hardy, and he ends his book with a semi-repudiation of the American continuations of the modernist tradition that he has so long admired. He acknowledges at length the centrality of Larkin and what Larkin stands for. Larkin has long been a vigorous admirer of Hardy, whom he places far above Eliot or Yeats, and it was an event of more than merely personal significance when Larkin turned away from Yeats, who had heavily influenced his earliest poetry, and made Hardy his model. Personally I would rather read Yeats than Hardy; like Davie, I have developed over the years an imaginatively reactionary taste for the large gesture and an assertive rhetoric, whilst realizing very well how un-English it all is. But I have to acknowledge that the tide is now running strongly in Hardy's favour, and Davie's reluctant tribute is only one indication. More and more critics are taking Hardy far more seriously as a poet than I have ever felt inclined to. So any time now I shall have to make a prolonged return to the text of Hardy's poems and see for myself.

Davie once wrote to me in a letter: "There *must* be more life in England than this, there must be some light other than this flickering, glancing one in which England is still beautiful." This remark can stand as a fitting statement of Davie's own aspirations and preoccupations as a poet, and even, to some extent, as a critic. It also chimes in with many of my own recurring feelings, which may be why Davie interests me so much. The whole problem of English identity afflicts many English intellectuals these days, and the invitation to write a "Letter from England" like the present one can arouse an almost painful degree of self-consciousness on the

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question. Of course, as a poetic idea "England" has affected writers for centuries, ranging from Shakespeare's history plays to the anguished letters that D. H. Lawrence wrote during the First World War. At times, reading the newspapers and watching the television news, it is the nastier quotations that come to mind, like W. H. Auden's clinical enquiry in *The Orators:* "What do you think about England, this country of ours, where no-body is well?" And yet with part of one's mind one continues to look for a light in which England is still beautiful.

I found it the other week, as a literal physical light, driving across East Anglia on a brilliant day of early March with Malcolm and Muriel Cowley, returning from a visit to the University of East Anglia at Norwich. It is a remote and strange part of England, not much visited and sparsely populated. The broad flat lands, with occasional church spires rising starkly out of them are very reminiscent of Holland, but without the density of population, and there is a strong Dutch influence on domestic architecture, particularly visible in the streets of the little port of King's Lynn. Out on the fens, as one drove along roads that were alternately as straight as a ruler and as winding as a mountain track, Ely Cathedral became visible on the horizon, prominent on a low hill, while one was still miles away from it. The sky was high, a great arching vault, and very clear; I had not experienced such a quality of light elsewhere in England. Ely Cathedral is a superb Norman structure which dramatically dominates the flat lands round about. A few years ago it was in danger of falling down, but restoration is now under way to the accompaniment of urgent appeals for funds. I was reminded that in L. P. Hartley's apocalyptic fantasy, *Facial Justice,* Ely Cathedral was the one tall building left standing in England, having inexplicably survived a nuclear holocaust.

Driving across England with the Cowleys was enlightening as well as agreeable. They live close to the land in Connecticut and know far more about it than I could ever hope to; their informed comments on the quality of the soil, the pruning of fruit-trees, the breeds of sheep and cattle in the fields, and many other country matters, not only exposed my town-bred ignorance, but made me see rural England with fresh eyes, as a place with inherent significance and not just a backcloth for nostalgic pastoral projections. I found a fresh sense in one of the triter phrases in the repertoire of quotations about England: Kipling's "What should they know of England who only England know?"

—BERNARD BERGONZI

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"Life in Death and Death in Life: Yeats's 'Cuchulain Comforted' and 'News for the Delphic Oracle,' " by Kathleen Raine

"The Two Sides of the Street," by Roy Fuller

"The Theme of Loss in the Earlier Poems of Catherine Davis and Edgar Bowers," by Helen Trimpi

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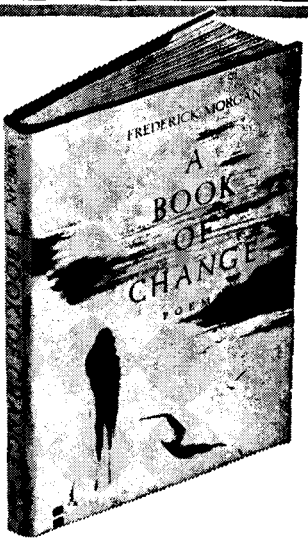

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